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(HANSARD)

Monday, March 17, 2003

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, March 17, 2003

The House met at 11 a.m.

[English]

Prayers

• (1105)

[Translation]

VACANCY

TÉMISCAMINGUE

The Speaker: It is my duty to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the representation, namely Mr. Pierre Brien, member for the electoral district of Témiscamingue, by resignation effective March 14, 2003.

Pursuant to subsection 25(1)(b) of the Parliament of Canada Act, I have addressed my warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for the election of a member to fill this vacancy.

* * *

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

MODERNIZATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE PROCEDURES OF THE
HOUSE OF COMMONS

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Friday, February 28, the motion to concur in the third report of the Special Committee on the Modernization and Improvement of the Procedures of the House of Commons regarding provisional Standing Orders is deemed moved, the question deemed put and agreed to.

However, the proceedings on the items now on the order of precedence will continue under the current provisions of the Standing Orders until all those items have been disposed of by the House at their current stage, while the subsequent stages will be governed by the provisional Standing Orders.

[Translation]

I wish to inform hon. members that the draw for private members' business will be held tomorrow at 1 p.m. in Room 112-N, Centre Block. The first 30 items of business will, however, not be transferred to the priority list until Friday, March 21, at 2 p.m.

(Motion agreed to.)

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

BILL C-24—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among House leaders and pursuant to that consultation I would like to move a motion that has received the consent of all House leaders or a representative in the case where the House leader was not available. Following that, I will be making another announcement. I move:

That all questions necessary for the disposal of the second reading of Bill C-24 shall be put without further debate or amendment at the end of the time provided for Government Orders on March 18, 2003.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the strength of what has just occurred, I now wish to state that tomorrow shall not be a designated day for the opposition. Instead, the opposition day will occur on March 24.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

FIREARMS PROGRAM

The Speaker: The hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast has given the Chair notice of a question of privilege.

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege relating to information provided to Parliament by the President of the Treasury Board. The minister has deceived the House in an attempt to keep Parliament in the dark with respect to the funding of the firearms registry program.

Privilege

As you are aware, the issue regarding the reporting of the funds for the firearms registry has quite a history. It is a history of deception. The latest deception involves the classification of the firearms registry as a major crown project. On February 25, 2003, in response to a question from the member for Yorkton—Melville, the President of the Treasury Board said, "...according to my information the program was not formally designed as a major crown project".

The Auditor General, in a letter provided to members of the public accounts committee, provides evidence to counter the claim of the minister. The evidence is not at dispute between the Auditor General and the President of the Treasury Board. The dispute over whether or not the firearms program is a major crown project comes from the same source: the Treasury Board. It is similar to the case of the former minister of defence, who gave two versions of events to the House, and is also similar to a 1973 case involving information given to the House and conflicting information given to a royal commission. I will present the two cases later.

The Auditor General has sent a follow-up memo to the MPs on the public accounts committee and the senators on the Senate national finance committee. The memo provides several examples in which both Treasury Board and the justice department make use of the term "major crown project".

The *National Post* obtained a letter from the Auditor General and published some of its contents on Wednesday, March 12, 2003. The article states:

"The Department of Justice now appears to be objecting to the chapter's description of the Canadian Firearms Program as a major Crown project, and it appears to consider this a significant matter," writes Ms. Fraser. "Our review of government documents related to the Canadian Firearms Program clearly indicated that the Program was a major Crown project."

In one example, Ms. Fraser wrote that draft versions of her report are sent to departments for review. Ms. Fraser states the Treasury Board did not dispute the term's use, and in fact corrected one paragraph, requesting that the phrase "major capital project" be changed to "major Crown project".

Mr. Speaker, it was the Treasury Board that corrected the draft report to read "major Crown project" with respect to the firearms registry. We have the minister saying one thing and the department saying another.

The *Ottawa Citizen* and the *Calgary Herald* ran a similar story. They reported:

Fraser wrote to the committee, saying that in March 1998, the year the National Firearms Act took effect, the Justice Department defined the program as a major Crown project when it sought preliminary project approval from Treasury Board, a committee of cabinet.

"The Treasury Board approved the submission in April 1998," says Fraser's submission.

In May of the same year, the department again stated the Treasury Board had directed the program be managed as a major Crown project.

In a November submission to the Treasury Board, the Justice Department "specifically noted that the project was a major Crown corporation," wrote Fraser.

Fraser told the committee that even in response to her own findings about poor spending controls in the program last year, the Justice Department and Treasury Board did not challenge her statement, prior to the release of her report, that the firearms program was a major Crown project.

A spokesman for the Canadian Firearms Centre two weeks ago told CanWest News Service that the registry had never been designated a major Crown project, but the department "treated" it as a major Crown project.

The same spokesman on Tuesday, when informed about Fraser's testimony, said he had since checked again and learned that the department had in fact treated only the computer-system components as a major Crown project.

On February 1, 2002, the Speaker ruled on a question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Portage—Lisgar concerning statements made in the House by the former minister of national defence.

The hon. member for Portage—Lisgar alleged that the former minister of national defence deliberately misled the House as to when he knew that prisoners taken by Canadian JTF2 troops in Afghanistan had been handed over to the Americans. In support of that allegation, he cited the minister's responses in question period on two successive days and alluded to a number of statements made to the media by the minister.

The Speaker said:

The authorities are consistent about the need for clarity in our proceedings and about the need to ensure the integrity of the information provided by the government to the House.

• (1110)

Even though the former minister of defence claimed that he did not intend to mislead the House, the Speaker found that a *prima facie* question of privilege existed. The Speaker said:

I am prepared, as I must be, to accept the minister's assertion that he had no intention to mislead the House. Nevertheless this remains a very difficult situation. I refer hon. members to Marleau and Montpetit at page 67:

"There are...affronts against the dignity and authority of Parliament which may not fall within one of the specifically defined privileges...the House also claims the right to punish, as a contempt, any action which, though not a breach of a specific privilege, tends to obstruct or impede the House in the performance of its functions; [or that] obstructs or impedes any Member or Officer of the House in the discharge of their duties..."

The Speaker concluded his remarks and said:

On the basis of the arguments presented by hon. members and in the view of the gravity of the matter, I have concluded that the situation before us where the House is left with two versions of events is one that merits further consideration by an appropriate committee, if only to clear the air.

The situation regarding the term "major Crown project" is similar. The minister advised the House that the firearms program was not a major crown project. It was reported to a committee of the House that the program was considered by the Treasury Board and the Department of Justice as a "major Crown project". In addition, the Auditor General reported to the House that it was a "major Crown project".

That term is significant with respect to how the government must report to Parliament on the funding for the firearms program. It is also significant that the firearms program is under intense scrutiny and the government believes that it would be advantageous to keep Parliament in the dark as much as possible. It is only advantageous, Mr. Speaker, if we let the government get away with it.

There was a case in 1973 when the member for Northumberland—Durham asked questions of the then solicitor general about the practice of the RCMP opening mail. Later remarks before a royal commission by the former commissioner of the RCMP disputed that claim.

The sum of this evidence permitted the Speaker in 1973 to find a prima facie case of contempt where the RCMP was alleged to have deliberately misled a minister of the Crown and the member for Northumberland—Durham, resulting in “an attempt to obstruct the House by offering misleading information”.

In the 1973 case, two versions of events were presented, one in the House and one at a royal commission. The sources for those two versions were the same: the RCMP. In 1973, the minister was not actually aware that he was misleading the House. He received his information from the RCMP.

In the case I present to the Speaker today, we have two versions of events as well: one statement from the minister to the House, and several statements to the contrary, from department officials, that were reported to a committee. As in 1973, the two versions came from the same source, with officials saying one thing and the minister saying another.

Adding to the allegation of deliberately misleading Parliament, we have an officer of Parliament, the Auditor General, confirming that Parliament has been and continues to be deliberately misled. The Auditor General's report to Parliament states:

Back in 1995, the Department of Justice told Parliament that the program would cost taxpayers about \$2 million. The Department now says that by 2004-05 the cost of this program could amount to more than \$1 billion.

And even though the department has many explanations for this ballooning of costs, it never shared any of them with Parliament...What's really inexcusable is that Parliament was in the dark. I question why the Department continued to watch the costs escalate without informing Parliament and without considering alternatives.

The Auditor General also pointed out that:

The information the Department provided states that by 2001-02 it has spent about \$688 million on the Program and collected about \$59 million in revenues after refunds. We believe that this information does not fairly present the cost of the Program to the government.

The Department also did not report to Parliament on the wider costs of the Program as required by the government's regulatory policy.

Furthermore, the entire Program was designated as a major Crown project. Treasury Board policies require departments, at a minimum, to annually report the following types of information to Parliament—

The government is playing fast and loose with the term “major Crown project” in order to keep Parliament in the dark. On the one hand, the firearms program is a major crown corporation, and on the other hand, it is not. The government claims on some occasions that the firearms registry is not a major crown project, yet on other occasions it claims that it is. The Auditor General reports that it is. The President of the Treasury Board reports that it is not. The House is told that it is. A committee of the House is told that it is not.

●(1115)

In the Speaker's ruling of February 1, he said:

—in deciding on alleged questions of privilege, it is relatively infrequent for the Chair to find prima facie privilege; it is much more likely that the Speaker will characterize the situation as “a dispute as to facts”. But in the case before us, there appears to be in my opinion no dispute as to the facts. I believe that both the minister and other hon. members recognize that two versions of events have been presented to the House.

Mr. Speaker, in this case, two versions have been presented to the House and to its committees.

The member for Yorkton—Melville has raised a question of privilege in the House on a similar matter. One of his concerns was

Privilege

the impression left with the public. He quoted a headline from the *Globe and Mail*, “Lies and contempt for Parliament at root of scandal in gun registry”; the *Ottawa Citizen*, “Government accused of hiding secret audit”; the *Winnipeg Sun*, “Liberals lied”. Now we have more stories about scandal, contempt, lies and cover-up.

While certain committees of the House are investigating the scandal aspect of the gun registry, we also need to look into the contempt aspect of this tragedy. There is enough evidence to show, as the *Globe and Mail* put it, that there exists “Lies and contempt for Parliament”. Of all of the investigations, this one is crucial because in order for other committees to be successful they must be assured that they are not being deceived. Those who are deceiving must be punished and the contempt for Parliament by the government must stop.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to clarify a point before the House concerning my response to a question from the official opposition. I was asked whether the firearms control program had been designated a major crown project by Treasury Board. I repeat my answer: According to my information, the program was never formally designated as a major crown project. That is the answer I gave.

I meant that, in order to be formally designated, this ought to have involved a decision by the ministers of Treasury Board, who meet regularly. To my knowledge, after an examination by my senior officials of all Treasury Board records and decisions, there has never been a written decision by Treasury Board formally designating this project as a major crown project.

That said, I think it is quite normal that there has been some confusion regarding this designation and, specifically, the Auditor General's remarks before the standing committee. Why? Because, according to many Department of Justice documents, this program should be managed as a major crown project, hence the confusion. It must be managed, but it has not been formally designated.

I think that, consequently, the Auditor General and the Secretary of the Treasury Board met to try to clarify this whole issue. They both agreed that, other than whether or not the program is designated a major crown project, the most important issue was that of parliamentary reports and their relevancy. This is really the most important issue.

It is so important that this same parliamentary committee—the Standing Committee on Public Accounts—has even asked me to appear this afternoon with the Auditor General to provide all the clarifications needed in this regard and to answer all the members' questions.

The Budget

For a number of weeks now, this program has raised numerous questions, and I can assure you that all the spending authorities for this program were approved by this House, in the main estimates, or the supplementary estimates, through related appropriation acts and, naturally, the public accounts.

That said, the Auditor General has stated that Parliament should have been provided with better information. The Department of Justice and the Treasury Board Secretariat completely agree with her on this. But once again, this afternoon, we will have the opportunity to debate this issue with parliamentarians and answer all their questions.

Far be it from me to provide the House with incorrect information. I have answered to the best of my knowledge.

• (1120)

[English]

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to quickly add a little to what the hon. President of the Treasury Board has said. I simply want to point out that the question of whether or not something was designated a major crown project is not a question of parliamentary procedure. Obviously it is a question of administrative process and therefore is a matter which is the prerogative of the government.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I think the remarks of the minister make it abundantly clear why you need to investigate this.

The Auditor General made it clear that the House was being kept in the dark. This was a major crown project and I do not think you have heard anything this morning that would take away from the fact that you must investigate this and investigate it properly.

[Translation]

The Speaker: I would like to thank the honourable members who spoke on this subject: the honourable member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, who raised the issue, the honourable Treasury Board president, the honourable member for Halifax West and the honourable member for Yorkton—Melville.

[English]

The Chair will take the matter under advisement. I will look into the matter and get back to the House in due course.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

BILL C-13

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that after further examination a correction has been made to the voting pattern in respect of Motion Nos. 23, 24 and 26 in Group No. 2 of Bill C-13. These motions will now be voted on separately and copies of the revised report stage chart are available at the table for perusal by all hon. members.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from February 26 consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Mr. Shawn Murphy (Hillsborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I first want to inform the House that I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Saint-Lambert.

I am very pleased to rise today to participate in the budget debate. I agree fully with the overriding thrust and objectives of the budget. I would refer to this budget as a threshold budget.

As everyone in the House is aware, when this government came to power we inherited a mess left by the previous Progressive Conservative government. Tough decisions had to be made and the correct programs and policies had to be implemented. It is only now that we are in a real position to make some of the additional investments in the social fabric of society.

I will focus my remarks to a certain extent on how the budget will benefit business, especially small business. Since the budget was tabled, I have spoken to a lot of ordinary Canadians, Canadians who go to work everyday, pay their taxes and who want the government to spend their money on the priorities of Canadians.

After having those conversations I was left with two very distinct and clear messages. First, people told me that they liked the budget, that they liked the additional investments in social spending and that they liked the fact that we were going to continue a record of balanced budgets. They also told me that they were getting sick and tired of the interest groups and the provincial premiers whining about everything. We heard that over the last two or three weeks.

I have also heard the argument that the level of spending far exceeds, in this particular budget, the level of growth in our gross domestic product. This is correct, and increases of this magnitude are certainly not sustainable.

However we have to bear in mind that approximately 50% of the increased spending comes from the health accord which is a threshold, non-recurring item and certainly a priority of all Canadians.

Dealing with the health care debate, which to a certain extent preceded the budget debate, I found it somewhat amusing. The Romanow commission crossed Canada, heard from Canadians and came forward with what I thought were excellent recommendations. The report was tabled in the House and the government responded to those recommendations. One of the responses, of course, was monetary. We have a package containing approximately \$35 billion over five years. This will facilitate changes in the way health care is delivered in this country. It offers limited home care, catastrophic drug coverage and changes in accountability. This was the biggest investment in health care ever in the country.

The Budget

What was the reaction of the premiers? It was total rejection. Why? I would suggest it is because the day they stop whining is the day they will have to start delivering. Right now the ball is in their court. They have to deliver and Canadians, certainly the Canadians that I talked to, are quite prepared to hold them to account.

I realize I am a little off topic but the points I want to make today go to how this budget is good for business, especially small business. Before getting into the specific provisions of how this budget will help small business, I want to say that the budget continues in the same basic direction that the government has been heading in the last nine years. The evidence is overwhelming. The fundamentals are correct. The monetary and fiscal stabilizers of low inflation, low interest rates, wholesale tax cuts and modest increases in government spending have led to a very healthy Canadian economy.

We have some right wing interest groups. The Canadian Alliance Party and the Progressive Conservative Party come forward saying that the tax cuts are not deep enough, that we have no business involving ourselves in the Kyoto accord and the environment, that everyone in Canada has a God given right to own a gun, and that we should cut government spending.

• (1125)

I say to them, let us forget rhetoric for a few minutes and talk about the numbers. Let us have what I would call a 30 minute lucid interval here. Let us deal with the facts.

Whatever ratio, or test or indices people want to use, I am willing to have a chat about it. If they want to talk about the debt to GDP ratio, or debt reduction, or the cumulative surplus, or the gross domestic product, or the projected gross domestic product, or jobs created, or the unemployment rate, or the interest, or the inflation rate or the consumer confidence rate, they can pick whatever indices they want and we can have a chat about it.

However the bottom line is the economy is performing healthily. The reason is that the fundamentals are correct, the programs are there, the fiscal and monetary stabilizers are in place and they are working.

Dealing specifically with the provisions of the budget that have a direct effect on small business, I am very pleased to talk about some them.

The first one I want to mention is the increase in the small business deduction from \$200,000 to \$300,000. This is a very healthy development. In a lot of cases we have small start-up businesses. They make some money. All of a sudden they get beyond the \$200,000 threshold and they get into a higher tax bracket. That \$200,000 threshold has been moved to \$300,000 which will have a very positive effect in our business community.

The second item which I am very pleased with is the elimination of the capital tax. The capital tax does not tax profit but it taxes the goods that make the profit, the capital. It was a regressive tax. I am a member of the finance committee. Three years in a row we have recommended the elimination of the capital tax. I am very pleased the government has followed up on that recommendation and the capital tax will be eliminated over the next four years.

I am also very pleased that the government has seen fit to decrease the air traveller's security fee from \$12 to \$7, which is a healthy development, especially for the short haul routes in the smaller regional airports.

I am very pleased the government is continuing with the innovation agenda. We have the increases to the granting councils, the increases in government funding to the universities for indirect costs of research and the scholarship fund. All these items add to the continuing of the innovation agenda which I submit will be very healthy for the Canadian economy.

I was very pleased the government announced an increase in the RRSP limits. This allows Canadians to plan for their retirement. It also provides a pool of capital for Canadian business. This will go to \$18,000 over the next four years.

I am also very pleased the government announced that it will continue with the skills and training agenda. This is so important for the future of our economy.

I am also very pleased the government has announced a \$30 million expenditure to increase investor confidence in the area of securities regulation.

The employment insurance premiums have been decreased. I believe that is 10 years in a row.

The government has also announced a decrease in taxes for income from resource revenue, decreasing 21% over the next five years.

Most important, I believe the message is there by virtue of a balanced budget. This sends a very clear message to all Canadians that the trends will be there in the future.

The government has also made very significant strategic investments in child care, environment, cities, child poverty and health care which very clearly define the link between social spending and economic policy.

I realize my time is up. I want to say to the House and to all Canadians that I support the budget. I urge my colleagues in the House to support the budget. We are laying the foundation for the future of the country. It asks us to all move forward with commitment, with confidence and with courage.

• (1130)

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my colleague from Prince Edward Island a couple of questions that are close to his area of concern.

The budget was very clear in the fact that it did not in any way adequately support the men and women of our Coast Guard. As he knows, the Coast Guard plays a vital role in the economy and in the security and protection of Atlantic Canada as well as the rest of the country for that matter. The moneys as stated in the budget are clearly inadequate compared to the moneys for which it has been looking. Could he comment on why the budget neglected those concerns?

The Budget

As well, last October the Prime Minister stated in a big press conference in Ottawa that parks were one of his major priorities and that they would be creating 10 more national parks throughout the country, including five marine parks. However everyone in that conference and everyone who has worked on this file for many years has stated that the minimum amount required is \$200 million over a five year period. Again the budget fell way short of those recommendations.

Why has the budget so inadequately addressed these two serious issues which affect the country?

• (1135)

Mr. Shawn Murphy: Mr. Speaker, I do not know what to say to my learned friend about the Coast Guard but the budget that I have read very clearly states that the Canadian Coast Guard will receive, and I may stand to be corrected, either \$75 million or \$90 million for additional capital requirements which I think is a very important announcement. That was in the budget. That is to start to replace the fleet, which hon. members have pointed out is needed. I read it. I am certainly pleased that it is there. I point out to my learned friend that it is there and that he should read it and applaud the government for doing that.

I want to applaud the government for the initiative on the national parks. While it was not in the budget, in the Speech from the Throne, the Prime Minister announced 10 new national parks for Canada, which is a tremendous initiative. These parks would be in remote areas of the country which I think would expand the infrastructure of our park system which is a tremendous development.

Again, I applaud the government for both the increase in the funding for the Coast Guard and for the announcement that we will be creating 10 additional national parks.

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, my question for the Liberal member from Prince Edward Island is pretty straightforward. Why is the member against his own farmers of Prince Edward Island?

The APF, agricultural policy framework, which is part of the budget, is not popular with the PEI industry. According to Doug LeClair, Executive Director of the PEI Federation of Agriculture, the island agriculture leadership wants nothing to do with it. That is why he says that this should remain unsigned. Still the member stands here and supports a budget that will hurt farmers in his own riding.

Mr. Shawn Murphy: Mr. Speaker, as my learned friend is aware, recently the Prime Minister announced that \$5.2 billion in additional funding would be made available for the agricultural industry across Canada. The agricultural policy framework followed an across-Canada consultation. It will provide additional funding for technology, for support for farmers, for environmental and for technology issues. This is a good development. It will lay the foundation for our agriculture industry into the future.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, I was not going to stand but after I heard that reply, I have to ask this question. Would the hon. member please tell the House just how long a timeframe that \$5.2 billion is extended over? It is not a one year program. It is over a number of years. Does he know how many years that \$5.2 billion is extended over?

Can he honestly say this? Has he not been listening to the producers of this country when they say they do not want the APF? All of a sudden he stands here in the House and, through the budget, says that it is the best thing since sliced bread. How long is that \$5.2 billion extended over?

Mr. Shawn Murphy: Mr. Speaker, I am amazed that a member of the Progressive Conservative Party would even participate in this debate. I know the member has heard it before that in 1993 inflation was 11%, unemployment was 11%, the deficit was \$42 billion and debt to GDP ratio was 71%. I have done my own calculation. If that party had been in power for another 20 minutes, we would have gone broke.

Going back to my learned friend's question, the \$5.2 billion was announced. It is an excellent announcement for the farmers of our country.

• (1140)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Yolande Thibeault (Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to address the House this morning. I am very proud to be part of a government whose priority it is to improve the quality of life of all Canadians.

I am especially proud of the fact that in the 2003 budget our government decided once again to address what I consider to be a very serious problem. I am talking about homelessness, a tragedy for thousands of people, especially young people who find themselves in this hopeless situation.

The dichotomy between those whose personal situation is improving and those whose situation is getting worse also exists in my riding.

At the dawn of this century when the effects of globalization and technological innovation are increasingly transforming not only the relationships between countries but also the daily life of all citizens, I feel we must pay special attention to the life of the community.

In an address to the House in October 1999, I commended the programs, then in their infancy, set up specifically for the homeless. I said that these measures could lose their effectiveness and end up being too scattered if they were not all coordinated by a single minister.

Today I would like to reiterate my comments and pay tribute to my colleague, the hon. Minister of Labour and federal coordinator on homelessness, whose efforts have been remarkable, and who has demonstrated such energy and sensitivity when it comes to working on this complex and difficult issue. She understands that thousands of Canadians have an urgent and pressing need for help.

Allow me to provide some context for homelessness. Who are the homeless in Canada? It is estimated that half of those who live on the streets are people with a history of mental illness, people who have been discharged from psychiatric care and have nowhere to go.

The Budget

There are also single parent families. There are also youth who have dropped out of school, who live on the street and who have not received the needed education or who are not ready to find a job and certainly not to hold one down.

We need a broad understanding of the problem in order to develop and implement programs and services that will provide support for all those who have no home.

Anyone can become homeless, regardless of age, gender or ethnic origin. Homelessness does not discriminate, one could say.

The fate of the homeless is such a pressing issue across the country that our government has announced that the supporting communities partnership initiative, or SCPI program, will be renewed for two years. The government will provide \$135 million per year over two years in order to help communities solve this problem.

• (1145)

Even a government with the best intentions, and even all levels of government working together, will never be able to solve the homelessness problem without the support of all Canadians.

Homelessness is a problem that affects all of society, and all of society must fight it together. We need to develop approaches and initiatives together with public administrations, community groups, educational institutions, the private sector and everyone who wants to contribute to the betterment of their community.

In closing, I would like to raise another point from the 2003 budget that is near and dear to me. I am referring to the announcement made by the Prime Minister of Canada last week on the action plan developed by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs to promote official languages.

I am a member of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, and I am very proud to support and applaud this government initiative.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton Centre-East, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I will preface my question to the hon. member by asking her what has happened with the \$753 million of homeless funding initiated three years ago and now at the end of its three year program?

Homeless counts are up 60%. Nationally, few shelter spaces have been added to the system. In Edmonton this winter, an LRT station was opened to put homeless people up on a few square feet of concrete floor. That is the progress that has been made in three years with \$753 million. In Edmonton alone, some \$20 million went into homeless funding and the result has been people sleeping on LRT floors. There has been no progress made if that is the result of it.

I ask the member opposite, what exactly does the government intend to do with the additional \$400 million? Will the homeless count be up again?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Yolande Thibeault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague opposite for this question. I listened to his remarks, and I can assure hon. members that in my riding, for example—to speak of a place I

know well—nearly \$7 million was invested, resulting in more than 20 initiatives. A dozen beds were added in a shelter for the homeless; apartments were provided for former residents of psychiatric institutions who need a transition period; Repas du Passant is another initiative in my riding to feed people living on the street. About 15 such projects are underway in my riding.

Allow me to share a little anecdote. Three or four weeks ago, the labour minister said to me, “You have been lucky, Yolande; there are several projects in your riding.” My reply was, “That is one way of looking at it, Madam Minister, but, in fact, this shows how great the needs are in my riding, and across Canada”.

[*English*]

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the hon. member who expressed great concern about the plight of the homeless and the increasing numbers of homeless people in Canada as well as the increasing pain and suffering to which they have been subjected.

I have no doubt that the member is very concerned about that. However, the reality is that the budget introduced by her government, while acknowledging that there are at least 100,000 homeless people in Canada today—a massive increase over anything we have experienced before—only offers in total 2,500 homes.

Can she shed some light on why the government turned its back on the very comprehensive proposal for the 1% solution put forward after a great deal of consultation among groups committed to affordable housing, groups working with the homeless, and non-profit and cooperative housing?

• (1150)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Yolande Thibeault: Mr. Speaker, my colleague opposite is referring to a situation that may be different from that of the homeless. She is talking about affordable housing and social housing.

This year, the government chose to add funding. Naturally, for the working poor, it will not be enough. It will never be enough. But if we look at what the government is doing for the homeless, in social housing and in other areas, I think that this budget is doing a great deal for our less fortunate fellow citizens.

The Budget

[English]

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, today we return to debate the federal budget. This is the Prime Minister's swan song budget, which is the best way I could describe it. It is not the budget that is needed for Canada because the priorities are all wrong, and as a result, I do not support it. As I said earlier to the member from Prince Edward Island, many farmers across the country do not support it.

I only have a limited time of 10 minutes for my speech, so I will touch on the main topics of agriculture, health care and, of course, the firearms registry.

Priority spending by the government is the problem and the Firearms Act is the best representation of the mammoth waste of money. A billion dollars has been spent so far with more being spent every day and this budget will continue to support that.

City people and non gun owners should be opposed to the registration of all the rifles and shotguns in the country because it is such a mammoth waste of time. There are so many priorities that need to be dealt with in the cities, that even they need to be against this waste of money. It is the duty of every Canadian, and in particular every firearm owner, to oppose this firearms policy and this bill that was formerly known as Bill C-68 and the continued funding for it. We heard points of order in the House this morning about how the government allegedly continues to deceive not only the House but also Canadians in general.

I do not know if the justice minister is listening to my speech this morning. I hope that he has some staff members listening to it.

In the farming and ranching communities we use firearms, rifles and shotguns on a regular basis. Farmers also have a hard time making a net profit and here we have the government imposing all these additional costs on them with no benefit to them.

The government calls it user fees, but in fact firearm owners are not the users. The government thinks it is going to control crime, which it will not of course, but that is who the real user is, supposedly the Canadian general public.

Therefore, I have to stand here and tell the justice minister that along with tens of thousands of Canadians across the country who are firearms owners, I will never register a rifle or shotgun. We need them in our ranching operations, but this mammoth waste of money and the infringement on individual rights in the country has to stop someplace. This is the time for all of us in Canada to take a stand and see the end of the firearms registry. The mismanagement and waste continues to grow. The government continues to fund it out of this budget.

In the town of Beausejour, in my area, there are not enough police resources to fight crime. What the town of Beausejour had to do was take its bylaw enforcement officers off their regular duties of enforcing bylaws during the day and put them on night shifts to do the work of police officers who were not available. That is real crime control, not registering the rifles and shotguns of duck hunters, farmers and ranchers like myself.

There is very limited money to combat child pornography in Toronto and Montreal. Can members imagine how many children a billion dollars would save?

What about lives? I mentioned I was going to talk a little about health care. In Manitoba last year we had three heart patients waiting for surgery. There were just not enough doctors, nurses or facilities available. They had their surgery rescheduled and rescheduled, and those people died waiting for surgery. That is a terrible shame of mammoth wealth being misused and prioritized in the wrong way.

We have spousal abuse cases. This too is a very sad commentary.

• (1155)

In the province of Manitoba, of course, the NDP government is unwilling to properly fund our crown attorneys. It is unwilling to do anything innovative about health care. As a result, the NDP government in Manitoba says that it will not be innovative, but that it will send heart patients down to the States, out to B.C. or wherever people are innovative, to get their treatment and it will pay for it, but that there is no chance that it will change the health care system. The NDP government in Manitoba only deserves a little bit of blame for that. The federal government deserves a lot of blame for insisting that provinces cannot innovate with the mammoth amount of health care money that is going in there.

It is St. Patrick's Day and I might look like I am mad about the budget that has come down but the truth of the matter is that I am bloody mad about the waste of money by the government. We are on the verge of trying to remove a dictator out of a country, a dictator who is tremendously sadistic and kills his own people. Of course I am talking about Saddam Hussein. The world has always had to stand up to cold-blooded killers and people who attack the innocent, the unarmed and the people who cannot defend themselves. That is what Saddam Hussein is doing to his own people, whereas our budget on military matters is very limited. The budget throws in a little bit more money to it but it is so limited that it will just keep the armed forces going in their current situation with no real improvements.

Here again, priority of spending, back to the firearms registry. This is how the firearms registry is working. This is a letter from a constituent:

I would like to take this time to let you know what my experience with the firearm registration has been like. I had seven firearms to register. I was going to be ahead of the game when registering my firearms so I sent in ALL my information for my firearms via mail using the old application forms. In April 2002 I received my registration cards. I took a quick look at the registration cards and placed them in my desk and did not look at them till just the other day, February 23, 2003. Well to my surprise there were only five firearms accounted for!

I then proceeded to re-submit the information for the firearms that were missing via the website. As I took a closer look at the registration cards I noticed that one of the guns registered on my licence was not even one of my firearms! So now FOUR of my firearms are not registered. I sent in the information for these firearms through the website and sent an e-mail explaining what happened.

Today at work I started to think about this and wondered if my firearms were registered to someone else. Well I guess time will only tell.

I'm the type of guy who will usually not voice his concern. This takes the cake. We trust that competent people are in charge of this whole gun registry. My application is proof positive that this is not the case.

The Budget

I was a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for 30 years. I am telling the government and Canadians that the firearms registry of rifles and shotguns will not work. It will not reduce crime and it will continue to waste money forever and ever if the government continues to support it.

I am really disappointed in the Canadian Police Association executive, not the policemen on the street, but the Canadian Police Association executive. It will be coming to Ottawa in the next few days to tell us all how the government should continue to spend billions of dollars on the firearms registry when in fact it knows that in the big cities of Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Calgary, police are trying to fight child pornography and child prostitution on our streets. That is the kind of crime that needs to be fought, not the registration of rifles and shotguns by farmers, ranchers and average Canadians.

My final comments on this to the justice minister and to the whole budget process is that I will not register my rifles and shotguns under this system.

• (1200)

Ms. Paddy Torsney (Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that a member of Parliament, who has pledged allegiance to the Queen and Her heirs, who comes here to pass legislation and who is responsible for invoking the laws of this country, would stand here in the House and say that he will disregard a law that has been rightfully passed by this country; a law that has passed through Parliament and through the Senate.

I wonder if the member for Selkirk—Interlake, as a former police officer and as a member of Parliament, would stand in his place and identify which other laws he will choose not to obey so that members of his constituency and all Canadians can get a full understanding of how it works when a law-abiding citizen chooses some laws to obey in spite of the fact that the majority of the population supports gun control, a majority of the members of the House passed the legislation and that in fact it is an important tool for police officers right across this country to deny access to guns.

How much money would he place on each of the lives that have been saved because guns have been held back from people who should not have them?

Mr. Howard Hilstrom: Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the current justice minister. The current justice minister on the other side of the House is not even willing to prosecute cases for non-registration of firearms. He has said that very clearly.

I would like to remind the Liberal member that the people of Nunavut do not have to register their firearms. They have a court injunction saying that they do not have to register. The Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations will not register. The Métis of Manitoba will not register.

She is trying to apply this kind of legislation on some kind of grand social engineering scheme to try to get rid of firearms from every law-abiding citizen, while the criminals will continue to have firearms and shoot and cause mayhem in downtown Toronto. This registration will do nothing to stop crime.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, although I agree with the sentiment

about the gun registry and the fact that I personally believe that it is a colossal waste of money for the Canadian taxpayer, I would recommend to the hon. member that as a representative and a member of Parliament for his riding he should not break any laws or advise anyone that he will.

We have to uphold the laws whether we like them or not. I understand his frustration. The people in my riding are adamantly opposed to the gun registry as he is but I cannot stand in the House and I would recommend that he not do it as well.

Being a former member of the fisheries committee, he knows very well the issues of the coast guard. The hon. member from Prince Edward Island said that he was very pleased that \$74 million would be applied to the coast guard over two years, but the reality is that will buy one coast guard icebreaker. We need more resources and I would like the hon. member to comment on the lack of resources for our coast guard in this budget.

Mr. Howard Hilstrom: Mr. Speaker, as a member of Parliament I will do everything in my power, both as a member of Parliament and as a citizen of this country, to change laws that are wrong and that waste our national resources. If members do not think this has been done around the world, and I certainly do not put myself in this category, but people have opposed oppressive regimes all through history; Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, all these people, when they identify a big wrong, they go against it. I am saying that Canadians should be against this waste of priorities.

The members over on the Liberal side laugh about deaths from heart attacks that could have been prevented with simple surgery. They laugh about child pornography. That member happens to be a female member from the Liberal side of the House. I do not know if she has any children or not, but the fact is that we have a duty and a responsibility to protect our children and using the money for firearm registry of law-abiding citizens instead of protecting children is wrong, wrong, wrong.

• (1205)

[Translation]

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I want to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques. So, I will have ten minutes to try to get through the February budget.

To start, I would like to say that I will be talking about four sectors that are very important to my riding of Lotbinière—L'Érable: employment insurance, softwood lumber, gasoline and agriculture.

Take employment insurance. For a long time, the opposition parties have unanimously condemned the Employment Insurance Fund surpluses. Several billion dollars were taken from the workers and employers.

It was hoped that, in last month's budget, the Minister of Finance would have announced changes to help the workers frequently penalized by this system. It was hoped that there would have been a real move toward change and a more flexible Employment Insurance Act, but this was not the case.

The Budget

All that we learn is that, in 2005, we should be getting proposals for change. Consultations must be held. What consultations? We do not know when they will start nor end. All we know is that, in the meantime, the current Minister of Human Resources Development is going to continue to use the legislation rushed through at the end of the 1997-2000 legislature. This legislation allows the minister to set the employment insurance premium rate.

But, in the meantime, the workers continue once again to suffer from this unfair legislation. It has become a hidden tax on employment. Often, to people in my riding, and even those elsewhere who have never earned a million or a billion dollars, such amounts are just numbers bandied about by politicians.

When people talk about hours and when they come to my office because they have lost their job, and I tell them they are not entitled to employment insurance because they are short 12 hours, they have no choice but to draw social security. That is quite telling. It happens every day. This is something we see regularly.

We can see how this legislation, which ought to be offering assistance to the unemployed, is badly drafted and penalizes many.

I would like to talk about the softwood lumber crisis. There is a lot of softwood lumber in my riding of Lotbinière—L'Érable. In recent months, we have seen companies shut down, either logging businesses or sawmills.

There have been job cuts. One might have expected the Government of Canada, with its surplus, to invest some of it until the World Trade Organization decision was reached. This government, and the Americans even more so, are letting things drag on. When the WTO does intervene, it may be too late. Our industry already has problems.

The member across the way says that millions of dollars have been devoted to softwood lumber, which is true. But right now, there is a shortage of money. Workers have had money made available to them, but nothing yet has been made available to the companies. Even if the Canadian government has made a small effort, much remains to be done to save the jobs of those working in the softwood lumber industry.

I will let my colleague say more about gas, but what explanation can there be for the fact that, in a certain village in my riding, one person owns two gas stations selling two different brands of gas?

• (1210)

Last week, someone who had saved his receipts showed me that, within 30 seconds of each other, the two different gas stations, representing two independent oil companies not associated with each other, raised their price at the pump.

Do you not feel that this smacks of collusion? We are working hard to get to the bottom of this. Here in Quebec, in Canada, we have the refiner, the distributor and then the retailer at the pump. Often the oil company controls all three levels, that is it refines, distributes and then sells to the customer.

I have always said that, when a service station closes down and a self-serve gas bar opens, that is because the oil company is operating it. My colleague will certainly address this further in his speech. I do,

however, have convincing evidence that, definitely, the oil companies talk to each other when there is any question of raising gas prices.

Price hikes have happened far faster. As soon as the price per barrel goes up on the international level, the oil companies react the very next day. So, as one would expect, it is always the customer who loses in this game.

Now, turning to agriculture, we would have hoped to see in the budget the funding La Financière agricole du Québec needs, that is \$100 million, to maintain farm support programs in Quebec.

Once again, because of its obsession with national standards, the Canadian government is blocking the process whereby an agreement could be reached between the federal government and Quebec. And who is, once again, penalized and forced to make difficult choices? The organizations in Quebec, or the Quebec government. Yet this system worked very well up until June 2002, when all the ministers got together in Toronto to renew an agreement that was working very well; that is when the current Minister of Agriculture imposed national standards. We believe that agriculture must be treated on a sectoral basis. For instance, agriculture in Quebec is completely different from agriculture in the rest of Canada. I would have hoped the Minister of Agriculture would have lent an understanding ear and maintained the traditional way of dealing with people in Quebec.

Let us take a look at supply management. We have yet to be given formal guarantees that supply management will remain as is at the WTO.

Two weeks ago, I met with representatives of the Syndicat des producteurs laitiers du Québec in my area. The butter and milk blends transported into Quebec across the border have an impact amounting to \$30 million annually. This is \$30 million that is not available to dairy producers in Quebec. This means that these products that make their way into Canada because of a lack of leadership at our borders result in a loss of income for our dairy producers in Quebec.

Again, when we raise this issue, we are told that we must be careful because it is part of overall discussions. I cannot help but wonder, however. We have documents showing that the majority of these products are coming from New Zealand, Great Britain and Mexico, with only 0.5% coming from the United States. This means that countries go through the U.S., knowing they will have no problem getting their products into Canada because our borders are sieves. That hurts the economy.

I am calling on the federal government to show more leadership in protecting and helping dairy producers in Quebec.

• (1215)

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to speak at this stage in the debate, following the excellent speech given by my colleague, the member for Lotbinière—L'Érable.

The Budget

I have a fairly simple question for him. He spoke at length about employment insurance. Indeed, one would have expected that the government would have decided by now to set up an independent EI fund, but instead we have been given a bit of a smokescreen. Seasonal workers are once again being forgotten—these are workers who, regardless of economic activity, work during certain seasons. The name says it all, they work in seasonal industries.

I would like it if my colleague could elaborate on this, to try to convince this government to take action to help these people, who, after all, are the ones who contributed the most to the fight against the deficit.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Mr. Speaker, my answer to that is that, indeed, we were hoping that the budget would outline an overhaul of the Employment Insurance Act, so as to take into account the reality of seasonal work. Unfortunately, such was not the case.

What we have seen is that the wall to wall approach, in other words, one national policy that applies from coast to coast, does not take into consideration regional concerns, nor does it take into account the specific circumstances in my riding or the riding of my colleague.

Some people work in tourism, farming, fishing or in forestry. When winter rolls around, unfortunately these jobs no longer exist. We refer to people in these jobs as seasonal workers.

If we really want the Employment Insurance Act to be fair for all workers, the next legislation will have to take this into account. However, what I did learn in reading the budget is that, first, we do not know when these consultations will start, nor when they will end. All that we know is that there may be a new Employment Insurance Act that would come into force in 2005.

In the meantime, what happens to these workers? They continue to contribute money that they should be able to draw on. This money is piling up by the billions and is being used to pay down the national debt.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister, who brought down the budget recently, said that the shipbuilding industry in Canada and Quebec was a sunset industry. We, of course, oppose that. One of his colleagues was very forceful in Bill C-213 to revive the shipbuilding industry in the country with the proper incentives from government and industry.

Could the hon. colleague from the Bloc comment on why this budget is so severely lacking in a shipbuilding policy for our regions in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Mr. Speaker, it is not hard to understand. It is because this government is not aware of the very significant regional economies.

For instance, in the riding of Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, if we had not received help from the Government of Quebec, Davie Shipbuilding might have shut down. Since 1993 when the Liberal government came into power we have witnessed the gutting of an industry that was once the pride of this country. This industry has

been let down. I doubt the current member for LaSalle—Émard got involved because he was in a slight conflict of interest, even though he has decided to pass on his company to his three sons.

In conclusion, once again the Liberal government is out of touch with reality. I would like to see the negotiations from now on in the former finance minister's family where the three children will have to ask the ethics counsellor if they can talk to their own father about Canada Steamship Lines. What a joke.

● (1220)

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to comment on two specific points in this debate on the budget.

The Minister of Finance included a contingency reserve in his budget. I have a suggestion for him that I think most people would support.

I suggest that the government respond to the current unreasonable prices of gas and heating oil with a \$130 credit per household. That would ease the pressure on consumers and families without unduly straining their budget.

The government should welcome this measure since it implemented a similar one in the fall of 2000 a few months before the last election when it paid \$125 to individuals and \$250 to couples to offset the cost of heating.

Of course when the government took this step in 2000, it was in a big hurry because the election was coming up. It went for a program that sent cheques to people who were dead or in prison even though they did not necessarily have any heating bills to pay. At the end of the day, this program did not seem to be a very good one.

The principle is that money which the federal government collected in taxes was returned to consumers, to citizens, so that they could pay their bills. I think that all members should vote in favour of this bill.

The Bloc Québécois is proposing \$130 for each of the 11.5 million households in Canada, for a total expenditure of \$1.5 billion. This is approximately the same amount the federal government remitted two years ago.

The difference is that we propose that this money be remitted through energy companies and suppliers, which could issue people a credit on their bills. When we get our electricity bills, we would see a \$130 credit, which would offset the impact of the increase. That way, cheques would not be sent to people who should not get one.

I think that the Bloc Québécois has made a constructive proposal while waiting for a resolution in the debate on gasoline prices. For the past year, the situation has been horrible and has meant an average increase, from February 26, 2002, to February 18, 2003, of 33% in the price of gasoline in Canada.

The Budget

This increase is not the result of an increase in taxes. That is barely 7%. Most taxes are flat taxes per litre of gasoline sold. For example, the federal excise tax is 10¢ per litre of gasoline sold. Therefore, this tax does not have an escalating effect. The same is true for the provincial taxes.

There is one federal tax that really should be eliminated; I am talking about the 1.5¢ per litre tax that was implemented to fight the deficit. For over five years, Canada has not run a deficit, but the federal government continues to pocket this money. I think that this tax needs to be eliminated, but we must, at the same time, ensure that this money finds its way back to the consumers and not to the oil and gas companies.

In fact, currently, although there has been a 7% increase in tax revenue over a one-year period with a total increase of 33% in the price of gasoline, the oil and gas companies have pocketed 94% more in profits in related to refining. They have gone from 5.1¢ per litre to 9.9¢ per litre. This is an increase of nearly 100%. With a 94% increase, it is as if profits related to refining had doubled. The gas and oil companies have yet to explain this.

There was also a 58% increase in the price of crude. We are going to look into this issue. Obviously the Iraqi crisis is being blamed, but it is an anticipated crisis that does not exist yet, speculation. It is not that there is less oil available even today at the moment of truth. It has not come to that yet.

This has to be examined in greater depth. In the long term, what is needed are corrective measures that would give the Competition Bureau more power or lead to a change in the organization and structure of the gasoline market.

We certainly have to ensure that there will be true competition. As it stands now, there is an appearance of collusion in the gasoline market.

•(1225)

The oil and gas companies should contribute to the work done in committee so that we can get to the bottom of this issue, shed light on it and propose the necessary corrections to avoid the situation we have been in for several years, or at least since I have been a member of parliament. Every two years there is a sudden price increase that usually follows an international crisis. We are given an explanation for the price increase, but the price never goes back down. When the crisis has passed, the inflated price becomes the new floor, creating the potential for even greater profits during the next crisis.

I think the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology should do something about this. The committee unanimously supported the motion that I moved to invite oil companies and specialists. I hope that the minister is also heard by the committee as soon as possible so that at the end of this session, the beginning of June at the latest, we have solid recommendations and that measures to correct this situation can be adopted in this House.

Obviously, this situation impacts on the price of gasoline for car owners. We are talking about truckers, taxi drivers, maple sugar producers. It is maple sugar season in my area. A lot of the sap boilers are oil-fired. People were surprised to have to pay 65¢ a litre this year when it was around 40¢ last year, which means it cuts quite

deeply into the profit syrup producers need to make to provide for their families.

The price hikes have considerable negative impact. It affects truckers of course. Independent truckers came up to me during my tour to tell me, "I don't have any automatic indexation clause". In any case, those who do end up having the consumer pay for it.

Taxis do not have automatic indexing. They have to go to the Quebec Commission des transports for an authorization every year. So they are the ones absorbing the present price hike.

Is there not some way to find a means of helping them? There is a provincial tax credit of \$500 in Quebec to help. When taxi drivers have an income of \$26,000, they can get a \$500 tax credit, but not at the federal level. Could there not be something similar put in place federally?

Then, of course, there is heating oil. I feel this is even more serious, because we are talking about the need to heat one's home. People are coming to our riding offices, or to consumer assistance organizations, for help in trying to balance impossible budgets. They had not planned for such a price hike; it was unpredictable and often it has now become impossible for them to make ends meet.

I am calling upon the federal government to realize what this means, to make use of its contingency reserve. I am also calling upon the Minister of Finance to make some announcement that will make it possible to achieve these results now, and not to wait for the next election campaign. Now is the time people need the money.

Once the government has taken this short term measure, our role as parliamentarians will be to ensure that members of the Standing Committee on Industry, Sciences and Technology take the measures necessary to put an end to the current appearance of collusion when it comes to the prices of heating oil and gasoline.

The proposed \$130 credit would be for everyone, regardless of whether they use oil or gas or electricity for heating, to ensure that there is not unfair competition between one energy source and another. Besides, in practice, when the price of any one energy source goes up, the others follow. That is why this measure seems so appropriate to us.

Switching gears now, in the budget—and I will close on this—it was announced that a technical advisory committee would be struck to study the disability tax credit. At present, this tax credit has had a very negative impact on people with celiac disease. The government does not want to recognize their eligibility for this tax credit. However, a judge has ruled that they should be eligible.

The Budget

Rather than accepting the ruling and applying it, the federal government has tried to deny that celiac sufferers have a major disability. I think everyone knows that celiacs cannot eat any foods that contain gluten. This leads to significant additional expenses. I feel that we should have gone further in the budget and authorized applying the credit to people with celiac disease.

• (1230)

[*English*]

Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's comments with regard to the issue of gasoline. As the hon. member knows, constitutionally the issue of competition falls within the jurisdiction of the Government of Canada and through the Competition Bureau. Where there have been specific complaints brought forward to the Competition Bureau, they have been acted upon. There have been a number of successful prosecutions over the years.

On the issue of pricing of gasoline, I refer the hon. member to the Constitution and the fact that it is a provincial jurisdiction. If he wants to talk to his colleagues in Quebec City, the Government of Quebec has the power as every other province has to put a freeze on pricing. In fact the government in March of 2000 forwarded a letter to all provinces suggesting that the government would suspend its portion of the GST on gasoline if the provinces would follow suit. Regrettably only one province bothered to reply.

Therefore on that issue, although we certainly understand the issue the member has raised, it really is provincial.

On the celiac issue, I point out as well that the government is taking specific action with regard to that. The member I know has had a long interest in this and again I refer him to the consultations and the legislation which will go before the committee in a few weeks.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my hon. colleague that what is at issue is not retail sales. It has been clearly established that it is not at the level of retail sales that undue profits are made. The retailers on street corners in our communities are not the ones raking in undue profits.

The issue is the following. The Competition Bureau should have been asked to conduct an investigation that is absolutely necessary to shed light on the current situation, but was not because of the industry minister's inaction. In the House, the minister refused to give the Competition Bureau the mandate to look into the matter. It was then that the members of the Standing Committee on Industry from all parties, including the Liberal majority, decided to conduct studies, to summon oil companies and to ensure that a debate take place and that we get to the bottom of this. The members of the committee were therefore very critical of the minister's inaction.

Regarding celiac disease, I am pleased with what my colleague has announced. Concerns remain, however. These people were being burned when the government introduced a draft bill whereby they would no longer be eligible to a tax credit. Since then, they have been living in uncertainty.

To make me aware of their plight, they invited me to a luncheon in my riding. I had the opportunity to see what they are going through. I

do wish the federal government would introduce, as soon as possible, a bill making them fully eligible for the disability tax credit. Our society cannot afford to do less.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question for the hon. member from the Bloc is this. At the end of this month the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans will make a decision about the cod fishery off Quebec, in Newfoundland and in the gulf. If he makes a decision, which I believe he will, to shut it down completely, close to 15,000 people, which includes fishermen and their families, in Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador and other areas who make their livelihood off the groundfish for the cod stocks will be literally out of work and probably out of the fishing industry on a permanent basis.

I would like the hon. member's comments as to why the budget is so inadequate when it comes to DFO budget increases for science. The science division within DFO has been cut drastically and is continuing to be cut, yet the budget has neglected that issue completely.

Could he explain why that is?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for this very relevant question. In fact, one of the worst scores given the federal government in the past 15 to 20 years has been in fisheries management.

This may be the most concrete example of a government which is out of touch with the public, which has mismanaged these resources, and which is taking a piecemeal approach. For a few years now—and this is important—the government has been focussing on the new economy, new technologies, investing in these sectors and trying to show that Canada is a leader.

However, at the same time, it is as if it had stopped fighting and given up on our significant natural resources, such as the forests and particularly the fisheries, which were once a source of pride throughout Canada, on both coasts. Today, it is taking a piecemeal approach to management, and making decisions for the short term. Communities have been left to fend for themselves. The government should be very harshly judged for this.

It is incomprehensible that the federal government has not aggressively tackled this issue in the current budget. Let us hope that the members' action will produce results.

The Budget

•(1235)

[English]

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this budget is a very promising document, full of optimism and promise for the future. The government should be very proud of it because it tells a story of sound financial management over the past few years. However it is completely silent on one of the most important issues of the day; and that is what will happen if there is an attack on Iraq? In the time allotted to me, I propose to examine the implications to Canada's financial future in the short term and in the long term if the United States and Britain undertake a unilateral attack on Iraq.

I point out to you, Mr. Speaker, that the budget before us tells a story of debt reduction of some \$46 billion over the last five years, the creation over the last year of more than 560,000 new jobs in the economy, and economic growth of 4%, and all this in a context where other countries in the world, both the G-7 and OECD countries, all are performing less well, including the United States. If all things were equal, what we would see is continued growth in Canada, continued erosion of the debt and continued growth in the economy, while occurs in the United States the opposite phenomena occurs. The United States is now looking at an increased deficit in addition to debt of some \$100 billion plus.

That is good performance in the context of a world economy that is weak. However what will happen to world economy if there is an attack on Iraq? It will be a different ball game. The people who will be hurt the most will be our American friends. I will give some examples at the very outset.

We know that a war in Iraq will create a reaction in the world. First of all, there will be a security reaction. I think the *National Post* had a story the other day in which the U.S. airline industry predicted a loss of 70,000 jobs and a loss of \$4 billion each quarter should the United States and its ally Britain unilaterally attack Iraq. We can understand why this is so because the public perceives the airline industry and airliners themselves as extremely vulnerable to retaliatory attacks by terrorists.

For example, there was the incident in Kenya in which two surface to air missiles were fired at an Israeli airliner rising from the airport. That sent an enormous chill through the airline industry around the world. All that has to happen is for one airliner to be shot down under those circumstances and it would be total devastation worldwide in the airline industry; the American airline industry and Canada's as well.

We already have a situation where Air Canada, our carrier, is facing a \$300 million loss in the first quarter and expects to have continued losses of about \$300 million to \$500 million in succeeding quarters. Air Canada admits quite freely that the reason why it is facing these losses, which could devastate the company and lead to bankruptcy, is because of insecurity worldwide with respect to air travellers being fearful of not the takeover of an aircraft but fearful of an attack on an aircraft.

Then there are other problems. Of course airports are centres of international communication where a lot of people congregate. People worldwide will appreciate that represents a significant hazard

that no amount of security in the world could solve. We can see right there that there is a problem.

Associated with that is the insurance industry. I am speaking of the American insurance industry, the Canadian insurance industry, Lloyds of London, all these organizations that insure various kinds of corporations and various kinds of enterprises in the world. They are facing an incredible disaster should there be a unilateral attack on Iraq and should there be terrorist retaliation worldwide. We are not talking about al-Qaeda. We are talking about the release of all kinds of individuals out there who may be disgruntled for whatever reason, whether it is religious, ethical or otherwise. The focus of their anger will be on American interests both abroad and, to some degree, at home.

•(1240)

This will create incredible insecurity. Insurance companies will have to escalate their rates or else they will have to stop insuring companies. There is a company in my riding that handles hazardous material. It has always been able to get insurance. It had to pay for it, but it could get it. It no longer can because of the nature of the substances that it carries. Now it is going to be forced out of business because without insurance it cannot operate. That is another example and that could be billions of dollars of loss in the American economy.

Think of tourism and what has happened to tourism already, Mr. Speaker. Whether it is the Caribbean, South America, the Far East, the Middle East, or wherever we go we will find that tourism basically has evaporated. Again it is because of the fear that has been generated by the prospect of retaliation if there is a unilateral attack on Iraq.

This costs companies in the United States and Canada, and very sadly, it costs countries terribly in the world, particularly in the third world because there are many small countries that rely principally on tourism. They have lost that tourism. Look at what has happened in Indonesia with the bombing of the night club in Bali.

It is true that perhaps here in Canada there will be some small gain for tourism because Americans have to go somewhere. We could see some benefit, but this is not a benefit that we as Canadians want. We do not want this kind of benefit at this price, particularly because it is going to devastate the travel industry in the United States as well. How many billions of dollars is that going to cost the American economy?

Worst of all is the fact that we can expect a massive backlash against all things culturally American throughout the world. Already there is a systematic boycott in much of the Muslim world against American-made soft drinks, both Coca-Cola and Pepsi. This is significant for two reasons. The followers of Islam do not partake of alcoholic beverages so soft drinks are extremely important culturally in any Muslim country in the world.

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Naturally the best technology, the best flavours, and the best soft drinks in the world are the ones that we too acknowledge are the best drinks in the world. They are mostly the ones that originally were invented and manufactured by the Americans: Coca-Cola, Pepsi and related products. We can travel anywhere in the Far East, Indonesia, Malaysia, Egypt or anywhere and we will see these products everywhere. They are manufactured under licence in these countries. These products are going to disappear from the shelves.

You may think the comparison to soft drink companies is trivial, Mr. Speaker, but it is not trivial. They are worth hundreds of millions of dollars to the American economy and they will lose that market abroad.

Even worse than that is what happened just after September 11, with the sabre rattling on Iraq and the problem with respect to Israel and Palestine. There have been various tries at boycotts in Muslim nations against U.S. products. If the Americans and the British do attack Iraq without the backing of the UN Security Council, I think it is very clear from what we are reading about world opinion that the majority of people around the world would regard that as an unjust war, an unjust attack. The negative reaction to American interests abroad will be incredibly profound. It will have an enormous negative impact on the American economy.

If the American economy is affected negatively, we can be certain that the Canadian economy will be affected very negatively. What will it mean to have had surpluses of several billions of dollars? Those surpluses will disappear when we as Canadians attempt to bail out Air Canada and attempt to meet the shortfalls of revenues that we may experience.

• (1245)

Think of how huge, if we extrapolate that, that problem will be in the United States. We will see a situation where pharmaceutical companies will have problems selling products abroad, any kind of American manufactured goods, and not just in Muslim worlds. There could be a reaction throughout Europe and China. This possibility of going to war in Iraq without the moral authority of the UN Security Council has the potential of catastrophic economic consequences against the United States. It is not a matter of just being short term; it could be long term. As a matter of fact, it is likely to be long term.

There will be some quick hurts. We will likely see the complete paralysis of the American airline industry. That will be counter-balanced by a surge in government spending on U.S. defence products and security products. There will be job creation at airports. As we increase security, there will be increased police forces and that kind of thing. But adding money to the military, adding money to the police and security officials, does not create wealth. Actually, it creates liability.

If the Americans, and they are apparently on the eve of doing so, go into Iraq without the support of the UN Security Council the economic consequences to the United States will be devastating. I think we can easily predict the outcome. Americans will not be able to travel abroad and successfully invest abroad. They will be forced back into the western hemisphere.

Now, of course, we have the free trade zone of the Americas. I think we can make a confident prediction that the Americans will

centre their economic and political power in the western hemisphere, and leave the rest of the world to the other interests. We can see what will happen.

The countries that will benefit most from the Americans being forced economically out of the rest of the world will be China, on the one hand, which will come to dominate Southeast Asia, and Europe, on the other hand, particularly France and Germany, which will come to dominate western Europe. Even Russia stands to gain. If American products are forced out of competition worldwide because of worldwide boycotts or worldwide resistance to the sale of their products, if American investors are not encouraged abroad, then European, Russian and Chinese businessmen will fill the void.

What we are looking at, I think, is a fundamental and overwhelming change in the way the world will be 10 or 20 years from now. We will have fortress western hemisphere dominated by the United States and two other zones dominated by western Europe and China.

China, with a billion people, is the sleeping giant economically. More than that, it is a people who have a long culture of enterprise, business, and commercial risk taking. The language of commerce in Southeast Asia is not Japanese. It is not English; it is Chinese. Certainly, if Indonesia and Malaysia, and that whole archipelago out there, reject American products and investors, China will be in there to fill the void.

I really do believe that this move that is being contemplated by the United States—no matter what the reason, no matter what the justification for the reason in the eyes of the White House or in the eyes of the British Prime Minister—is going to cost their countries enormously. Just speaking of Britain, it will be excluded from Europe. Its ability to have a say in Europe will be compromised. Its ability to sell its products will be compromised. Do we think the Commonwealth will make much difference to the United Kingdom after it takes a stand on the attack on Iraq that is completely contrary to the position taken by all members of the Commonwealth? I do not think so.

I do not want to sound terribly bleak, but I do believe that what we are looking at now is the precipice of a fundamental change in global dynamics. It is just not the fact that we will be losing the United Nations as a significant voice. This will be creating a climate of rivalry which our children, and perhaps our grandchildren, will pay for because we will create three great zones of power: the western hemisphere, under the United States; western Europe, under the Europeans; and Southeast Asia, under China.

• (1250)

That is not the vision of the world that we saw at the end of the second world war when the United Nations was established. The United Nations was all about the people of the world trying to seek solutions to the conflicts and problems of the world collectively. Now we will have the kind of global super powers that will perhaps be more dangerous and difficult to deal with than when it was simply the Communist block versus the western nations.

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There are so few benefits in this. Even the fact that the dollar is strengthening is not a benefit for Canada. We notice that on the market the dollar has been climbing and we must understand the only reason the Canadian dollar has been climbing over the past few weeks is because investors around the world have become more and more uncertain about the economic future of the United States, and so the U.S. dollar has been weakening. We have actually been climbing at the expense of the American dollar. This is actually a bad thing for us because as the Canadian dollar rises it becomes more and more difficult for us to trade with our only really significant trading partner, which is the United States.

So, we are intimately tied to what the Americans are proposing with respect to the invasion of Iraq. I wish the White House would listen to its friends because we as a government, as members in the House—most of us at any rate—have appealed to the Americans to be cautious, to listen to world opinion, to support the United Nations, and to not go down a unilateral course that would only bring, I think, despair, want and hunger on much of the world.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments. He obviously has grave concerns about the future of our planet let alone anything else. However, I want to remind him that Air Canada was in serious financial trouble long before September 11. In fact, one of the things I like to say is that what Air Canada and Nova Scotia have in common is they both have a \$12 billion debt.

What this budget completely ignored, if I may go back to domestic issues, is our forestry workers, agricultural farm families and fishing families. Those are industries that employ literally millions of Canadians along with their families. They are suffering under the weight of the trade agreements we have come under and the protectionist policies of the United States.

I wonder if the member could comment as to why this particular budget was so severely lacking in those three major issues? I would especially like him to comment on the decision that the fisheries minister will be making. I suspect that at the end of the month he will shut down the cod fishery in the gulf and in northern Newfoundland and Labrador, effectively cutting off the livelihood of 15,000 fishermen and their families on a permanent basis.

I wonder if he could comment why the budget was so severely lacking in these specific details?

Mr. John Bryden: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his comment because it fits perfectly into my earlier remarks. One of the reasons why the budget is silent on these trade issues with respect to forestry, lumber and all these issues having to do with our relationship with the United States is the Americans are now completely ignoring rational trade agreements. The Americans are overwhelmingly subsidizing their farmers, as the member opposite well knows.

The reason why we cannot address the problems of the farmers in terms of trade agreements is because the Americans are acting more and more unilaterally not only in ignoring the trade agreements but in putting unfair subsidies into their industries. It is all part of a pattern that has occurred in the last couple of years, where the U.S. administration, the White House, which is in charge of foreign policy, has set an example of unilateralism and ignoring multi-

lateralism, refusing to consider the interests of countries other than the United States, even countries as close as Canada.

As for the cod industry, I know a little about it as well. I do believe that many of the problems that existed with the east coast fishery have been as a result of federal governments of the past putting too much subsidy into the fishermen of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland to the point where the fish stocks, including the cod, have been compromised. We do know that the cod stocks dropped dramatically. It is not just cod. In the east coast fishery when the cod moratorium occurred, some of these massive operations that developed as a result of federal and provincial financing, but primarily federal financing, which put more stress on the environment than the environment could stand, has switched to other types of fish that are also under threat.

Then added to that we have the whole problem that there has been severe environmental damage done to the Grand Banks and the ocean floor around our maritime provinces not only by commercial trawlers, both domestic and foreign, but I also point out that there is some evidence that the dumping of toxic chemicals at the end of the second world war may be having an effect on the cod stocks. I applaud the government for finally showing an interest in locating these dump sites of chemical weapons. I have long had the fear that it is these chemical weapons that may have been having a very negative effect on the fisheries on the east coast.

Finally, let me simply say that when the fish are not there, governments have to do drastic things. It is an accident of confederation that it is the federal government that has the yea or nay say on what fish are collected off our coasts and not the provincial governments. I would suggest if it was a power of the provincial governments, they would do exactly the same thing.

• (1255)

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest, as I always do, to my hon. colleague opposite.

I heard him mention about a company not being able to get insurance because of the hazardous goods it carried. I want to develop this into a question for the hon. member because I come from a province that has about 50% of all the agricultural land in Canada. Sitting in front of me is my colleague from western Saskatchewan which has had two consecutive years of drought and what did grow, the grasshoppers ate later in the fall.

The premiums for Canada crop insurance, which the farmers have to enrol in in order to survive, went up 52% in the hopes of covering the losses. We did not hear too many complaints about that, with the exception that most of the people cannot pay the premiums and therefore, they are unable to insure isolated crops on their own farms. It seems to me with the vast amount of agricultural land across Canada that had a deficit of \$.5 million, when I look at this budget I would have thought the government would have said it would do something about that. However, it did zip because the amount of money it put in had to be divided by five.

I want to tell the hon. member that we are suffering out there and the crop insurance is not going to work because people cannot pay their premiums for total coverage.

The Budget

●(1300)

Mr. John Bryden: Mr. Speaker, I know they are suffering out in Saskatchewan and it is a great preoccupation with all members of the House of Commons. One of the things I am very proud of is that whether we are from Saskatchewan or Ontario or New Brunswick or Nova Scotia, we are concerned about the farmers in Saskatchewan.

The problem though again is this hideous situation in the United States where it is getting so difficult to compete with our product no matter how efficiently farmed because the U.S. farmers are receiving all kinds of hidden subsidies. I cannot make an intelligent analysis or reply to the member's comment opposite. The area of crop insurance is not one in the budget that I have examined personally. As a result of the intervention I will examine it though and put it in the context of the caucus members on this side who are from rural Canada and see whether there is a better solution, because always, the budget is not cast in stone. It is a formula for trying to find a way to do the best things for all Canadians and to help those sections in the country who are most in need.

Our difficulty always is that we are a country that is so dependent upon trade abroad and being so dependent, we are dependent upon the goodwill of those we trade with. One of the hardest problems recently is that goodwill from our major trading partner has been more absent than present perhaps, in the last few years.

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in rising to speak to the budget debate, I should perhaps remind the House that government budgets are about spending other people's money. It is very easy for us to forget that, especially when decisions are being made on the other side of the House about grandiose social engineering projects such as the gun registry that was mentioned by one of my colleagues earlier today.

People forget that this is about spending other people's money. Members should spend a little time thinking about the families in their ridings who are struggling to get by, to pay their mortgages, to buy their groceries and to pay all the bills while the government over there grabs so much of their paycheques to pay for things that those people do not want. It is all about spending other people's money and I will give some examples of this.

While we are busy spending other people's money, it is very easy to forget that the success that has given that side of the House so much money is not because of the Liberals' policies particularly; it is because of the governments of Ontario and Alberta, those free enterprise governments, and the initiatives they have taken to make business and the economy work well. That is who has generated the wealth for that side of the House to spend.

Not only are the Liberals spending other people's money but they are spending money that was created because of other people's efforts, not their own efforts at all.

I can give the example that as soon as politicians get into election campaigns they think it is a great idea to spend other people's money. Just yesterday or the day before, Quebec Premier Bernard Landry promised that he would force companies to make a four-day work week available to parents with young children. The pay would be commensurate with four days but he would force the companies to pay benefits equal to a five-day week.

It is so easy for politicians to stand up and pass something in a budget that dramatically affects the business community with no consideration about the hardship that it would put on companies or the people who work there.

A good example from the federal government along a similar line was increasing the maternity benefit to a year. I got lots of letters of complaint in my riding. One would think it would be the opposite but people are not stupid. They realize that if they are going to be paying for people to stay off work for a year, it will be tremendously disruptive to business and it will cost taxpayers a lot of money. But again, it is so easy to spend other people's money without giving a thought to the consequences.

I have stood in other budget speeches in this place and asked members opposite to reach into their own pockets and pay for those grandiose schemes they are so much in favour of. Why do they not ever reach into their own pockets and support these things instead of expecting the rest of us to pay for them?

Out of 10 provinces and 3 territories at the moment, only Alberta and Ontario are net contributors to the system of national transfers. I am looking at a newspaper article which mentions that the C.D. Howe Institute has repeatedly noted that for every dollar the provincial governments of these two provinces receive in Canada health and social transfer, Alberta and Ontario taxpayers pay out \$1.30 in federal taxes. Where is the value for that? Meanwhile, for every dollar the Quebec government receives from Ottawa, it pays only 70¢ to Ottawa. A similar situation exists for the so-called have not province of Newfoundland and Labrador where taxpayers only pay 50¢ for every dollar they get back.

What this amounts to is the taxpayers of Alberta and Ontario, let us say families who are earning \$30,000 to \$40,000 a year and paying federal taxes, are actually subsidizing families in Newfoundland and Labrador who are earning \$40,000 or \$50,000 a year because of the massive transfers to support grandiose programs there. This is not fair.

Albertans and Ontarians, like British Columbians who until recently were also net contributors to the system, are as patriotic as anyone else but they just do not think that it is a fair system of redistributing other people's money.

●(1305)

At the time B.C. crossed into being a have not province, in the last couple of years, our traditional spending federal revenue status saw only about 8% of federal spending in B.C. That was despite a generation of providing 13% of the national revenue. We were providing 13% of the national revenue and, for a whole generation, we never got more than 8% of the federal spending. Now we are a have not province and we are still only receiving 86¢ for every dollar we send here. There is something terribly wrong with a system that does that.

The Budget

The federal fuel taxes alone in the year 2000 in British Columbia took out \$750 million from B.C. That was \$750 million with not a cent spent on our highways. We can look at the terrible condition of some of the highways, including the Trans-Canada. Parts of the Trans-Canada in British Columbia are so dangerous that they are not even registered as a highway in the North American register of highways.

I was in the United States for a few days over the break. It is astounding the amount of money going into infrastructure and freeways down there. It is absolutely incredible, the freeway building that is going on. The highway system is such an important part of a country for the transport or the ease with which commerce can take place. It is just appalling to come from such a marvellously developed country into one like Canada where we see no spending on infrastructure at all, with nothing being spent on the Trans-Canada, while the federal government drags huge amounts of money out of the economies of the provinces.

Of the \$5 billion-plus that the federal government drags out of fuel taxes, 100% just goes simply into general revenue. In comparison, in the United States 92% of those revenues go directly back to the states to spend on their highways and that is why they have decent highways. That is why their infrastructure has developed so well and why that country does so well.

In British Columbia, as I mentioned, we have the Trans-Canada in a terrible state. Highway 97, the major freeway in Vancouver, is not even as wide as the freeway through Ottawa because there is no money to expand it, yet we have almost four times the population. There is something wrong when this government looks after its own territory but is not interested in helping the provinces look after theirs.

Again, if that is not bad enough, as I said, the government gets into its social engineering plans using other people's money. The federal Minister of Transport right now is currently soliciting VIA Rail to reinstate its subsidized passenger rail service between Vancouver and Calgary. That was a disaster. We spent hundreds of millions of dollars supporting that unprofitable line decades ago. Thank goodness it was finally canned when Rocky Mountaineer took over with a privately funded and run railway. It makes a profit. It attracts tourism to the provinces of Alberta and B.C. It is a spectacular success. Why on earth does the government want to spend other people's money creating another subsidized railroad to undermine the businesses that pay the taxes? It just does not make sense.

This budget is so full of examples like this that it is sickening. I could stand here for a whole day talking about things like the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. One of my pet hates is its \$120 million a year, pretty much unaccounted for, which is spent on all sorts of queer and strange projects. That is hundreds of millions of dollars wasted. It does not produce any wealth in the country at all. Most of what the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council hands out in grants appears to go to financing vacation time for academics to travel to other countries and take photographs. It is certainly not contributing to the running of the country.

Right now in B.C., as I mentioned, we are suffering from highway problems. We have the Minister of Transport trying to undermine our private rail service. We have the federal government refusing to talk about offshore oil exploration, which could help us tremendously in getting back on track and becoming a contributing province again. Why is it that we have to fight and battle our way for every single cent out of that budget while hundreds of millions of dollars, billions of dollars, are wasted on the gun registry? It is frustrating. It is about spending other people's money. It is a terribly bad budget. If we only could get our way, we would vote it down.

• (1310)

Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member's comments. He mentioned Alberta and Ontario as excellent examples of good fiscal management. I would suggest that over the years the Province of Ontario has withdrawn over a billion dollars from colleges and universities, has cut back dramatically on spending in the social field and has used federal tax dollars to supplement health care.

Last year \$2.2 billion was announced, of which \$2.1 billion was federal transfers. He forgot to mention that. The fact is that Ontario's cap, because of deregulation, has been a disaster. It capped hydro rates. We have gone through a very severe winter and now it is estimated that it will cost hundreds of millions of dollars because of that mismanagement by the Ontario government. It is not exactly the best example.

I am surprised that the member does not mention our good fiscal management and the fact that in terms of paying off the national debt we are now down to our lowest in many years. We are down to 44.5% of GDP from 71.5% just five and a half years ago. There is also the fact that we are making strategic investments in infrastructure. We could talk about the strategic infrastructure fund, which communities across the country can support. We now have doubled that to over \$4 billion.

There is municipal infrastructure, again, with a 10 year program, which is something that for many years municipal governments across the country have asked for.

The fact is that governing is about priorities. The priorities are clear. Health care was the number one issue. I did not hear the member mention the fact that although health care is administered by the provinces, the government, again meeting collectively with its provincial colleagues, worked collaboratively in that area. I would like to know if the member does not believe that this type of investment, which I am sure is critical to constituents in his community, will affect the appropriate delivery services in terms of the changes that are needed by his constituents and others across the country.

The Budget

Mr. Ted White: Mr. Speaker, I think we are just going to have to agree to disagree on the relative merits of withdrawing funding for various social programs, because there is ample evidence for anyone who cares to look. Around the world, the countries that have the highest standard of living, the best prospects for jobs and, in fact, the lowest unemployment rates are all countries that intelligently limit their social spending. They intelligently limit it so that they are not encouraging people to live off welfare or take advantage of generous handouts. They limit their social engineering. There is ample evidence to show that is the case. The provinces that are successful here in this country have in fact done that.

I remember when the minister of finance of British Columbia wanted to put a limit on the collection of welfare: that a person had to live in the province for three months first. We were getting droves of people coming into British Columbia, which had the most generous welfare collection scheme. The federal government threatened to reduce our transfers because we wanted to put some sort of intelligent limit on the abusers of the program.

There is a lot to answer for on that side of the House in terms of intelligently limiting social transfers.

In terms of the debt repayment the member mentioned, yes, the government has paid down a bit of the debt, but again, one of the most common criticisms of the budget I have received from my constituents is that the government has not paid down enough of the debt. Anybody knows that if one pays down one's debt one gets much more money to spend and does not waste it on interest. The government is still blowing away more than \$35 billion a year on interest. That is enough to build 150 brand new Lions Gate bridges in Vancouver every year. It is a huge amount of money. If the government had concentrated on paying down the debt earlier, we would be in a much better position. It would still be able to blow money on social programs but would not be taking it away from highways and other important projects.

Finally, in terms of health care, if the member thinks that throwing more money at the problem is the solution, he has his head in the sand. Everybody who has studied the problem knows that is not the answer. There need to be structural reforms; that is a fact. We need to be having an intelligent debate about how to repair this. One of the things we could do is encourage the provinces to be creative and make a much greater use of the private sector in the delivery of health care as a way of reducing costs.

• (1315)

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand with my colleagues today, on the fourth day of debate out of a possible six, and talk about the last budget, tabled in the House roughly a month ago.

The biggest thing I see in the budget is that anything to do with taxes went up immediately while anything to do with spending, where we get our tax money back in programs we may or may not want, is all done over the next two to ten years. There is a huge disparity here as the government takes in all this cash and then spends it out.

The problem with a lot of the budgetary process we have to grapple with in this place comes back later in the fall and in what we are dealing with now, which is what is called supplementary budgets.

Last fall the supplementary As were tabled. They addressed the shortfalls, let us say, in a lot of different government departments. Among them were a couple of contentious issues, such as more funding for the gun registry, which practically everybody has come to hate because of the costs involved. No one has a problem with safe gun handling and so on, and no one has a problem with registering gun owners, but the problem has arisen in registering all of the guns across the country. That is where the rubber met the road and the government found itself lacking. Programs like that are already in place, but the government has blamed a lot of it on a computer registry that would not work and so on.

I was in Ontario for the municipal convention two or three weeks ago. One fellow talked about the number of drivers and cars registered annually in Ontario. Those numbers were pretty much a correlation to the numbers of gun owners and firearms that the Liberal government says are in this country. The government has had a number of years to register the same numbers, using a computer program that totally failed, yet Ontario does that on an annual basis with car drivers. Serial numbers, people's ages and the same types of requirements are still being dealt with, so how can one province do it annually and yet the federal government cannot seem to get it right in the last seven or eight years? It has spent \$1 billion and still does not have it right.

We see that type of thing come up in the supplementary budgets and I know that the government is going to take another stab at it in the next day or two in the supplementary B budgets. This time it is asking for \$172 million or thereabouts for that failed gun registry, and that will keep this thing alive until the end of this fiscal year, the end of March.

The last time I looked at my calendar that is two weeks away, so the government needs another \$172 million to pay off some debts that occurred because it could not cover them with supplementary As. The government withdrew that itself. In an unprecedented move in this place, the government actually pulled back that demand for cash. Now it is bringing it forward again, but it needs \$172 million to run this thing for another two weeks. That does not make a whole lot of sense. Then it wants another \$113 million for next year, according to this budget.

This is not just about the tabling of the budget. It comes down to performance reports. Did taxpayers get any bang for their buck or are they just buying a pig in a poke, as it were, and continuing on with somebody's legacy? It is a major question out there.

I looked at some of the specifications in this budget. Global government spending increased 7% in 2001 and 18% in 2002, well above the rate of inflation. We are going way beyond keeping up; somebody has a wish list here that they are trying to cover.

The Budget

Last year an announcement was made on a major five year tax reduction package. Where is it? I have talked to people in my riding, and my constituents have phoned me telling me they have not seen that on their bottom line. I know that my paycheque as an MP does not reflect any tax savings and, Mr. Speaker, I am sure yours does not either. What happened to that? It has all been pushed off again. None of the major changes happen until 2004, and I guess that is an election year. What a coincidence. Imagine that. Imagine that the government would bring in tax reductions in an election year. How about that?

Program spending is another thing. Spending for the period 2002-03, which is ending in two weeks, will be almost \$179 billion. That is how much money the government will take in. It will spend most of it on whatever is required, and a lot of it we question. Next year it is going up to \$185 billion.

A lot of folks out there, as well as a lot of my constituents, are saying that we talk a lot of numbers. One million dollars used to be a big number, but now anybody can win that in a lottery. We can understand \$1 million and we can get our heads around that, but as for \$1 billion, which is where all the government numbers seem to float, people cannot get their minds around the disparity in these numbers. The government lost \$1 billion here but is pledging \$1 billion there, to official languages or whatever it is, and people cannot seem to get their minds around the disparity.

• (1320)

I had a fellow at a meeting in Owen Sound explain it. He said that the best way to get it across to folks was to convert it to time. He said that if we converted a million seconds it worked out to 11 days rounded off. A billion seconds is 32 years. That is the disparity. That is the difference between a million and a billion. If we convert that back to dollars then people start to realize that the kind of money that is squeezing out between our fingers here in Ottawa is just huge.

With that spending of \$178 billion, the new finance minister, the rookie, challenged all government departments to find \$1 billion of savings out of that \$178 billion, or half of one percent. That is chump change. That kind of money could be found laying around on the floors of most departments. Yet the Auditor General in her report said that the federal government last year misplaced, misappropriated or misspent \$16 billion. Fifteen per cent of the spending went in the wrong pigeonholes. Programs could have been trimmed by that. That money could have gone to paying down the debt which would have brought our health care and infrastructure spending back online over the next few years. There is a huge disparity there.

The finance minister is looking for \$1 billion in savings. The Auditor General had already told him earlier last year that there were \$16 billion and she laid it out line by line. She said money could be saved here, here and here but that was not mentioned. None of that has been addressed, that type of money that could be found and reassessed.

It really flies in the face of so-called good fiscal management. If we had those kind of dollars coming through the federal coffers over the last decade—and there was one government in place for that last decade—where did the money for health care go? Where did the money for infrastructure go? Why are these programs in such disarray that we have to start addressing them again? If we had that

type of cashflow in any business situation no one would lack for anything. Each department would have more than it needed. Where did the cash go?

We saw huge cuts in health care. We saw the EI surplus absconded and shoved into general revenue, some \$40 billion. I guess some of it went to those great projects in Shawinigan and so on, but there were cuts to health care and transfers to provinces of \$25 billion; \$40 billion in the EI surplus disappeared; \$25 billion out of the pension packages for all government employees got ripped out and put into something else, and we are still these kinds of dollars behind in infrastructure.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce calls the infrastructure deficit across the country somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$57 billion. That is sewer, water, highways, bridges, and all those types of infrastructures. Every one of us in every riding across the country knows that it is very real. We started allocating money back to it, but the \$3 billion here for infrastructure, added on to what we have seen in the last few budgets, is over 10 years. There is a \$57 billion infrastructure deficit and the government is going to address it with \$300 million a year. That will not even maintain it. That will not even fill in the potholes on the bad stretches of a road or repair a bridge, let alone build one. It certainly does not replace any water and sewer infrastructure.

I know we have had some major water and sewer problems in a city in my riding. It is trying to get some funding to address it but it cannot seem to trigger any money. It received a few hundred thousand dollars to address a couple of new wells but nothing of the magnitude it needs, the \$20 million it is looking for.

A three year program just is not going to do it.

Here is another example that interests me from my riding. The Battlefords is the historic site of the Old Government House for the Northwest Territories. We governed from North Battleford probably three-quarters of Canada before the western provinces joined in, and right into northern Quebec. It was all governed from Battleford, Saskatchewan. We still have the physical structure of Old Government House sitting up there on government hill. As long as I have been an MP, and before that, for 10 years people have been trying to find the funding to restore that historical structure and cannot get five cents. I guess if we jacked that sucker up and moved it east we might find some money but we just cannot seem to tweak it now.

It is a budget that just does not go anywhere. It is based upon a lot of different issues but nothing that really crunches out.

The final couple of points I would make are these. The problem with a budget like this which tries to address a little bit for everybody really solves nothing. Another point that comes to mind is that with it being pro-rated out over the next number of years, it will be up to the next leader over there, not the current one, to deal with all the fallout. I think it is nothing more than another attempt by the Prime Minister to buy himself a legacy. Maybe he has alleviated a couple of problems, maybe not, but ultimately history will judge that these types of budgets have done so little for so few that they really were a waste of time.

The Budget

•(1325)

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, my colleague alluded to one of the big things where I come from and where he comes from, which is the billion dollars the government has wasted on the gun registry. I would like the member to understand what we are hearing now and that is that the gun registry is saving so many thousands of lives and is stopping people from having unregistered guns .

Why is it that every press release that ever came out from the gun registry since its inception until now was proven incorrect? Why should we believe the figures now when we have 200 press releases that were totally incorrect?

Mr. Gerry Ritz: Mr. Speaker, I guess the bottom line in a lot of what we have seen in the gun registry has not been practical policy. It has been political spin to try to handle a problem that happened in Montreal, of all places. It turns out that a lot of this direction is going in a totally wrong-headed way.

No one in the country, including me as a gun owner, a hunter and so on, has any problem with training, safe handling, safe storage or registration as a gun owner, but the government does not need to know what I have unless I mess up with it and then, by all means, it can throw the book at me, as should be done, but we are not seeing that now. We are seeing money redirected into a false sense of security.

My other colleague from Selkirk—Interlake said that he had 30 years of service in the RCMP and retired as a staff sergeant. He saw what was required in the country and part of what drove him to run in 1997 was the wrong-headedness of the registry. This will not address it.

I talk weekly with my own RCMP members in my riding about this. I talked to them at a banquet I was at the other night with a number of members. We were sitting at a table discussing the gun registry and I asked them how they would handle this now that it was back on their table. They asked me what I meant. I asked if they had not heard the announcement where the justice minister just handed it off to the Solicitor General, that it was now back under RCMP purview. These guys did not know anything about it. I guess they did not get the memo.

The RCMP want nothing to do with this. They do not even want to handle the firearms that are turned in. They do not want to because most of them are not registered to do it. An RCMP officer who does not verify, check or do something just right under this stupid legislation can face a one year prison sentence and a \$2,000 fine. This is a peace officer who is caught in the middle of this bureaucratic bungle. It is just absolutely untenable that this situation go on.

I did the PAL finally because I wanted to purchase some more guns. I found out that the two handguns that I used to register had not been registered correctly from 30 years ago. Now they want to take them away. I am a criminal because someone else lost the records. I phoned the firearms officer and the staff sergeant at the RCMP and asked what to do with my prohibited handgun. The firearms officer told me to weld it shut and make a paper weight out of it if I wanted to keep it. The police told me not to bring it to them

because they wanted nothing to do with it. They said that if I had it for 30 years I should keep it.

Who is right? I am getting caught in the middle of all this bureaucracy. I am trying to figure out what to do with the handgun. I do not want to give it away because it has some sentimental value and some monetary value. I have had it for 30 some years and have not accosted anyone with it and yet this stupid law says that I am now a criminal because someone else did not keep track of the records properly. It is just ridiculous.

•(1330)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Ottawa—Vanier.

With respect to the budget policies announced by the Minister of Finance, we know, when we return to our ridings, that this budget is good for Quebeckers.

We know that by investing to support Canadian priorities and values, our government will make our society one that is even more equitable and more supportive, while remaining the only G-7 country to maintain a balanced budget that will invest in the future of our families, regions and environment.

My riding is the largest federal riding in all of the ten Canadian provinces. It covers over 800,000 square kilometres and there are 63 mayors in the riding. Indeed, when we return to our ridings during the breaks, we have the opportunity to talk with people.

Last week, I was talking with Pita Aatami, the president of the Makivik Corporation and an economic leader in the community. Since he took office, he has shaken things up a great deal in Ottawa when it comes to economic and social issues. There have been a number of examples. Because of the pressure he exerted on our government, we invested in economic development in this budget.

Pita Aatami has been directly involved in a number of issues, including marine infrastructure, social housing and especially, of late, readjusting electoral boundaries. In April, a ruling will be handed down by the commission that is responsible for the boundaries.

I say this because some of the economic leaders in our region live in outlying areas. We know that the Inuit contribute to the economies of Quebec and Canada. They are the only ones in Canada to pay direct taxes to the federal and provincial governments. They pay taxes.

We know that the budget that has now been in effect for several days strengthens the health care system thanks to several measures, including an \$34.8 billion investment over five years, the 2003 health care services accord that was just signed by first ministers.

It is important not to talk only about numbers, but also about what is happening in our hospitals, whether they are in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, outlying areas, or in large urban centres. We know that this reform is being carried out and will help all governments.

The Budget

It was not just the Minister of Finance who was involved in the recent reform. We can thank the Prime Minister of Canada, the Liberal member for Saint-Maurice, who negotiated and worked with the provinces. We know this was not easy but he stood firm to ensure that taxes were used to help the health sector.

Another truly important sector is the help given to municipalities. For instance, \$3 billion is being invested in infrastructure and \$2 billion will be invested in major projects. This leaves \$1 billion for all Canadian communities and municipalities, including those in Quebec.

We know that \$1 billion divided among several provinces and territories represents a few hundred million dollars for each province or territory. We know that with the infrastructure agreements, Quebec analyses and the federal government does its part.

We could also ask ourselves what could be done to help Quebec. People ask us questions such as: What about the federal transfers? I always tell people in my riding that the transfers are our taxes that are being returned to our municipalities and outlying regions in Quebec.

There will be a transfer of \$2.5 billion to the provinces. Quebec will receive roughly \$587 million, which will immediately be invested to ease the current pressures through the Canada health and social transfer supplements. This means that the provinces will have flexibility in using this money based on their needs until the end of 2005-06.

There is also the health reform fund. It is definitely important. Families and communities have not been forgotten. We know that in the budget there is an annual increase of \$165 million for the national child benefit supplement until 2007. This measure is similar to the socio-economic measures that the Government of Quebec is using to fight child poverty.

Nonetheless, in terms of tax benefits, there is one thing that bothers me in Quebec: people know very little about these issues.

• (1335)

People never ask, even when there is an election, where the Government of Quebec gets those \$5. Not from taxes, I will tell you where. It takes them from the family allowances of Quebec families. It takes \$5 directly off family allowances, which means that Clémence Côté of Val-d'Or, Abitibi, whose 10 children do not go to day care, loses \$32. So she is helping out her neighbour, whose children do go. This is something I find regrettable.

Quebec will find a solution, regardless of what party is elected the next time, as to where that money can come from. I know they could go to Loto-Québec, and we all know how much they are making these days with the video poker machines. There is talk of \$10 million a day, which certainly adds up, after several years.

Then there is the development of aboriginal businesses. Several million dollars is going into aboriginal communities, and particularly aboriginal businesses. The James Bay Cree, the Inuit of Nunavik, the Algonquin in the area and elsewhere in Quebec have been heavily involved in setting up new businesses. They are business people capable of finding solutions and to move forward.

We hear much talk in the regions of the price of gas. It is not an easy situation. I share the concerns of the people of my area and the Quebec City area. I have an aunt, Monique Lavigne, in Saint-Romuald, and she tells me, "Guy, gas is too expensive". In June 2002, they were paying 69¢ or 70¢ a litre for regular, and now in Saint-Romuald they are paying 87.5¢. And what is located in Saint-Romuald? Refineries. People living next door to refineries are still paying the same high price for gas.

To give an example, the place in Quebec and perhaps in Canada where fuel is the most expensive is Kuujuaq, in the territory of Nunavik. The Inuit pay taxes and they are paying \$1.22 a litre. A solution must be found in order to move forward.

Locally, assistance must also be provided for manpower training. There is funding, and transfers have been made to Quebec for vocational training. These millions of dollars will help the workers. The universities will find ways of moving forward to innovate with research projects, but the tax system must also be improved. We know that this measure included in the budget will result in an increase in after-tax gains of up to \$9,000 per year, which will help businesses to expand.

I have seen a number of budgets over the 15 years, or 14 years and several months, that I have been sitting in this House. Under this government, not to mention the previous one, many budgets were brought down, and I must say that this budget is one of the best I have seen as the member of Parliament for the vast riding I currently represent.

A number of improvements are required, however. For example, a solution must be found with respect to the cost of diesel fuel for forestry workers. It is very expensive. So is heating fuel; we have had a very cold winter, and households are paying very high prices for heating fuel.

Let me tell you that this is an excellent budget. Improvements can be made without going the budget route, through an order. The mining industry made a number of gains in this budget, but alternate solutions must be found in order to move forward.

• (1340)

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Thank you Mr. Speaker. I congratulate the hon. member, whom I consider to be the champion for the Inuit, particularly those living in the province of Quebec.

[English]

I was very interested in what he had to say about the very high cost of fuel, heating and travel in the 14 Inuit communities of Nunavik. I know this is a matter of great concern to him.

The Budget

I have always been struck that this is literally the part of the world which has the highest tides anywhere on the globe. I think the member will agree that this itself is an extraordinary thing. I am coming to the energy point in a moment, but this is something that could be promoted for tourism reasons. It is very unfortunate that other parts of the world are recognized for high tides when the highest tide in the world is in the area of Kuujuaq that the member represents.

My question with respect to energy is this. I know the Inuit people are very interested in renewable energy and it seems to me the tides present an opportunity for that. I know that some years ago tidal energy was thought of in terms of building dams across estuaries. It destroyed the estuaries and these dams proved impossible to control the tides. I know now that there is a new turbine that can be hung in the ocean. I understand it is being hung from abandoned oil rigs. The turbine operates from whichever way the water comes. What is more important for us on the east coast of Canada is something that can operate under the ice.

Is my colleague interested in efforts to tap tidal power to help his Inuit constituents obtain a local source of renewable energy?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy St-Julien: Mr. Speaker, I am taking good note of the question of the hon. member for Peterborough, but first I want to discuss the issue of tides. People often wonder which area has the highest tide in the world. I want to point out that the highest tide is not in the Bay of Fundy, but in Tasiujaq, which is located in Nunavik, a few kilometres north of Kuujuaq. This is where they have the highest tide in the world.

As regards the issue of turbines, we know that the President of Makivik Corporation, Pita Aatami, has been around for a number of years. Mr. Aatami is a leader who finds all sorts of ways to get the government moving and also to get me moving.

It is with people like Pita Aatami and Johnny Adams, who are active in the area, that we will improve the hydro situation. It is not just the issue of dams in Nunavik. It is with leaders such as the ones we have right now in Nunavik that solutions will be found.

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I too am pleased to take part in today's debate on the most recent federal budget.

First, I would like to point out some of the strong points of this budget, and then elaborate on three aspects that I would call the general nature or thrusts of the budget. I will also discuss issues relating to science and express one minor reservation.

First, one of the strong points I support without any reservations, and which was mentioned by most of my colleagues since it is the fundamental and core issue of this budget is of course the renewal of health transfers to the provinces.

We are talking about a massive transfer of \$34.8 billion over the next five years, in addition to existing transfers. There is also the transfer of tax points, which goes back to the late seventies. These transfers seek to ensure that we can maintain the health system that Canadians want, namely a publicly run health system that is accessible, portable from one province to another, quite comprehen-

sive and, ultimately, a system that does not involve direct costs to users.

Everyone has noticed that there have been some failures over the past few years, to the point that we felt it necessary to address this situation, which is most definitely a priority for Canadians.

We received recommendations from many people, including the former Premier of Saskatchewan, Mr. Romanow. As a result, all the provincial and territorial governments and the federal government were able to agree on the Accord for Health Care Renewal.

I think that everyone can already say that we want to keep this system and we will keep it with this additional \$34 billion in transfer payments over the next five years.

There are also very important programs for families, including a significant increase of \$965 million annually, hardly peanuts, in the National Child Benefit.

There is also money for daycare services. Furthermore, an agreement was announced last week. Once again, all the provincial and territorial governments reached an agreement. Improvements and upgrades can be made, in some cases, to daycare services. I think that this is very good news.

There are also new initiatives for families who have to take care of disabled children for instance. I think the budget has allowed for substantial progress in this area.

The same goes for housing. I am pleased to see that an additional \$320 million will be added to the \$680 million already set aside, for a total of \$1 billion in funding over the next five years from the Government of Canada to obtain and build affordable housing. I think that is fair.

The envelope for the homeless has also been renewed. Once again, this announcement was made in the past two weeks. It involves \$405 million over three years, which is a renewal of what existed before. I admit that as a member of parliament from one of Canada's large cities, namely Ottawa, we are not exempt from this type of problem. We also have homeless people.

I have seen in the past three years how well this program has been used in our community. Incredible work has been done by all the stakeholders, and hundreds of new shelters have been added. We are now able to help people who probably need it the most.

● (1345)

[*English*]

I will refer to one particular project, the inner city health project, which has demonstrated that when we care about people and care about them actively, we not only make a difference in the lives of these individuals and improve their situations, but we reduce costs to our community and to the health system as well.

The Budget

I would hope that the inner city health project in particular would be one that we would continue to fund through the mechanisms that have been established with the city of Ottawa and so-called SCPI federal money, if I can call it that.

[*Translation*]

All that to say that some good initiatives are under way.

[*English*]

When we are at the notion of initiatives that are continued, I would be remiss if I did not salute the government's decision to add a total of \$3 billion over the next three years to our infrastructure programs; \$2 billion to the strategic infrastructure program, which makes a total of four that will be spent starting next year and for the next 10 years, notwithstanding whatever else could be added to it in future years, as will be determined if we have surpluses in those years; and another \$1 billion for municipal infrastructure, perhaps of a lesser level. In total \$3 billion has been added to the municipal infrastructure program. I am very happy that has been done.

I was happy to be appointed to the Prime Minister's task force on urban issues and our core recommendation was indeed that we commit to this kind of infrastructure program on a longer timeframe. We had recommended at least 10 years, perhaps even as long as 15 years, to allow municipalities the time to plan and to have an integration of these two programs; this program and their own needs. The announcement made in the September throne speech and the confirmation in the budget of an additional \$3 billion in overall infrastructure money bodes well for our capacity to renew the existing infrastructure.

• (1350)

[*Translation*]

I would be remiss if I did not mention the environmental envelope, so to speak. The government has earmarked \$2 billion to follow up on the ratification of Kyoto. That is an excellent initiative, and I hope progress will be made in advancing this whole issue.

I must admit that I am having difficulty understanding some things. For instance, I have learned that in the next month or two, in Europe, 10 municipalities will each receive three buses fuelled by Ballard cells, courtesy of Ballard Power Systems Inc. and DaimlerChrysler. Since this technology was developed in Canada, I wonder why no Canadian city will benefit from this program.

I urge the government to take money out of this \$2 billion envelope so that we too can benefit from this technology and continue to develop it here, in Canada. I cannot understand why this program currently applies only to 10 European municipalities. I hope that some of the \$2 billion will be used to take a similar initiative in Canada, so that our comfortable lead on the overall fuel cell industry is maintained.

I want to quickly move on to the issue of international aid. I applaud the initiative to double, by the year 2010, our international aid and, of course, the additional yearly amount of \$800 million for the defence budget, on top of the \$270 million earmarked for this year.

I want to congratulate the government regarding the general thrust of the budget. I notice that, over the past several years, we have

reduced our deficit by \$47.6 billion. This year we will probably reduce our debt by more than \$50 billion. This achievement deserves to be praised and I hope that the government will properly point it out.

Let us compare this with what is going on south of the border. Over the past 18 months, the Americans have accumulated a debt that exceeds \$600 billion. This is more than our cumulative national debt throughout our whole history. Therefore, I can only congratulate the government for the course and the thrust that it has chosen for our country. If we stay that course, we will see a continuous increase in the value of our dollar, in our economy, and we will be better off. Hats off to the government.

I also want to thank the Minister of Finance and all my colleagues who supported a project that is dear to me. I am referring to the long range plan of Canadian astronomy and astrophysics and, in particular, to a specific initiative.

[*English*]

The government has announced that it will support the Atacama Large Millimetre Array project, ALMA, which is part of the long range plan of Canadian astronomy and astrophysics. In the year 2000 the NRC and NSERC both set out a 10 year plan to maintain Canada's leadership position in astronomy and astrophysics, and with this commitment we will do so.

I am very happy that we have been able to carve out the money required for the National Research Council to commit to this project. It is a project that involves the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Japan, Chile and of course Canada. It consists of 64 antennae, each 12 metres in diameter, arranged on the 10 kilometre diameter circle at Chajnantor, the high plateau in the Chilean Andes, which is essentially the largest ground based project in the history of astronomy. Congratulations on that.

[*Translation*]

I now wish to express a minor concern. I fail to understand why the government reduced by \$25 million the budget for the television production fund. To my knowledge, Canada is the world's second largest exporter for both English and French television productions. This industry is expanding in Canada. I find it hard to understand why, at a time when the government is generating surpluses, it feels the need to cut \$25 million from this \$100 million budget.

I am not saying that this will prevent me from supporting the budget. On the contrary, I will support it. However, I do hope that the full budget for this initiative will be restored as soon as possible. Our English and French television production capability and our export capability in this area deserve to be supported. I hope that we will succeed in convincing the government to restore this budget at the earliest opportunity.

•(1355)

[English]

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to hear the comments of the member for Ottawa—Vanier and what appears to be a fairly typical Liberal response to the budget, which is to make it into something that it is not in reality. Nowhere is this more apparent than when it comes to health care.

The member for Ottawa—Vanier, like his other colleagues, has failed to point out in the course of this debate that in real terms the government has failed to implement the Romanow commission recommendations. The budget leaves a \$5.8 billion Romanow gap.

The member, like his other colleagues, fail to acknowledge that with this additional funding in the budget today, the federal government will still only at the end of it all be at an 18% share of federal financing in health care.

The member fails to point out that the new money available in this coming fiscal year for health care amounts to \$2.5 billion, hardly the amount required to deal with the looming crisis in health care in Canada today.

I want to ask the member two things.

First, why did the government fail to do the right thing, which was to implement Romanow?

Second, why did the government choose, when it had a choice, to bring in a \$1.2 billion tax break that benefits the rich in Canada and the large corporations? Why did it not choose to put that money into the priorities of Canadians: health care, housing, the environment, child care and so on?

Mr. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Speaker, I fail to understand the member. The budget addresses everything she has mentioned. By anyone's standards, \$34.8 billion is quite a bit of money.

When she says that the Government of Canada's contribution to the health care system represents 18%, I have to disagree. That fails to take into consideration tax points. If the provinces want to give up those tax points, I would reckon this side of the House would welcome them back because 13 tax points, plus the commercial tax points, represent billions of dollars annually. I would hope that she would consult the provinces before willing the tax points back to the government because I do not think they are willing to transfer them back. However to fail to account for them demonstrates an unwillingness to see facts as they are and only wanting to see them as we hope they would be. The truth of the matter is these tax points represent an important sum of money and they should be accounted for in the public accounting of spending on health care in this country.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to commemorate International Women's Day, on Thursday, March 6

S. O. 31

I hosted the fifth annual breakfast in my riding to acknowledge the accomplishments of the women of Parkdale—High Park.

The event celebrated the success of local women including: Dr. Wendy Cukier, professor at Ryerson University and president of the Coalition for Gun Control; Judy Fong Bates, High Park writer; Janis Galway, developer of equity inclusion programs, Angela Gei, producer, actor and community activist; Sonia Potichnyj and Slava Iwasykiw, owners of Lemon Meringue; and Lisa Zbitnew, president of BMG Canada.

International Women's Day is an ideal opportunity to reflect on the progress made to advance women's equality, to assess the challenges facing women in contemporary society, to consider future steps to enhance the status of women and, of course, to celebrate the gains made in these areas as well as an opportunity to honour all women in our communities.

* * *

TERRORISM

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, for at least a decade the Liberal government has known that the MEK was raising funds in Canada to support the activities of the terrorist National Liberation Army in Iraq. Yet despite all of the evidence available to the Prime Minister and the fact that the MEK has long been branded as a terrorist organization in the United States, the MEK still does not appear on the latest Canadian list of banned organizations.

Why is it that the official opposition has to continually bring these groups to the attention of the Liberal government? Whose interests are the Liberals protecting by refusing to ban the MEK from fundraising for terrorism in Canada?

It is time that the members over there gave their heads a shake. They need to abandon their naive and dangerous multicultural endorsement of terrorist fundraisers. It is time to draw up a complete listing of all terror groups active in Canada so that we can put an end to their fundraising activities once and for all.

* * *

•(1400)

PEACE SCARF

Hon. Andy Scott (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise the House that on Saturday, March 8, 2003, almost 300 people gathered at Wilmot United Church in Fredericton for the afternoon to demonstrate their commitment to peace and to bring this commitment to life by working together knitting this scarf.

Folks from the New Brunswick College of Craft and Design, the Fredericton multicultural community, CISV, OXFAM, Freedom and others spent the afternoon knitting and supporting each other during these critical and fearful times.

This scarf, which was presented to me, represents the diversity of people opposed to a war in Iraq, those who do not want to see Canada involved in a war in any way, shape or form.

I join with my friends in the belief that the act of war must be the final resort, only to be waged when there are absolutely no alternatives. We are not there.

S. O. 31

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada successfully passed a review by the World Trade Organization, which gave it an enviable grade for its trade policies. Canada's trade practices and policies are among the most transparent and liberal in the world.

All countries are regularly subject to a review of their trade policies. The resulting report takes stock of their policies and highlights certain shortcomings and progress achieved in terms of market openness.

The World Trade Organization, through its member countries, suggests, however, that Canada seek new trade opportunities rather than depend on its ties with the United States.

The Minister for International Trade replied that Canada is making great efforts in this regard, but that the proximity of the Americans makes the situation more complex.

* * *

[*English*]

BADGER FLOOD

Mr. Janko Peric (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in mid-February the community of Badger, Newfoundland was hit by terrible flooding, followed by freezing temperatures that left the town devastated and many homeless.

In my riding local businesses and organizations like Nemcor, Elite Vending, the Real Estate Board of Cambridge and the Newfoundland Club of Cambridge have raised money and relief to help the people of Badger.

My constituents, as well as local companies and organizations have always been there to help other regions of Canada when they have faced disasters.

I would like to congratulate the efforts of all those involved, especially the Newfoundland Club of Cambridge, for showing leadership in helping the people of Badger.

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ZORAN DJINDJIC

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the world has come to know the horrors of crime and terror once more as one of democracy's shining stars was brutally assassinated.

Zoran Djindjic became Prime Minister of Serbia following the end of President Milosevic's brutal reign.

Djindjic made it possible for the United Nations to indict and capture numerous war criminals in the former Yugoslavia. He re-established diplomatic ties with the west and it was under his watch that Canada dropped sanctions. He waged war against organized crime and pledged his country's support for democracy and for human rights.

For these actions he became a target of criminals and recently lost his life.

On behalf of Canada's official opposition, I would like to thank Mr. Djindjic for his sacrifice and wish his successor, Mr. Zoran Zivkovic, our full support in continuing on with these much needed reforms.

Most of all we would like to thank the Serbian people for their perseverance and for their commitment to peace and democracy.

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ST. PATRICK'S DAY

Ms. Paddy Torsney (Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House today to wish all Canadians a very happy St. Patrick's Day. Today, all Canadians join those of us of Irish descent to celebrate in a spirit of comradery and goodwill.

March 17 offers an opportunity to note the vital contribution that Irish Canadians have made to the history of this great country. It is no surprise that 14% of Canadians claim some Irish ancestry. During the famine of the 1840s millions of Irish left their homeland. Many travelled to Canada where they found a flourishing community of Irish people.

Some of Canada's most prominent leaders have Irish roots. Four of the first five Governors General of Canada were Irish, as were eight Fathers of Confederation, including of course D'Arcy McGee. Some of Canada's famous business leaders are Irish, including Hilary Weston and the late Timothy Eaton.

I wish all Canadians a very happy St. Patrick's Day. *Caid Mille Failte.*

* * *

● (1405)

[*Translation*]

IRAQ

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, although the Security Council did not authorize a war, it seems that there will be a war on Iraq. However, we still do not know if Canada will take part or not.

On one hand, the Prime Minister says that Canada will not participate in any war not backed by the UN; on the other hand, he says that the existing resolution already authorizes war and that Canada will take part in an authorized war. On one hand, he says that he does not approve of war aimed at a regime change; on the other, he submits a proposal authorizing, after a deadline, a war that, everyone knows, is aimed at a regime change.

In fact, the government says what the public wants to hear but does whatever Washington asks.

The 250,000 people assembled in Montreal the day before yesterday do not know what to make of this contradictory and ambiguous behaviour. They want their elected representatives to oppose Canada's participation, period.

Put an end to ambiguity and let parliamentarians decide by allowing them to vote here, in this House.

METROSTAR GALA

Ms. Hélène Scherrer (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last night the MetroStar awards gala once again showed Quebecers' admiration for television artists. Sophie Lorain and Guy A. Lepage received the awards for female and male artist of the year respectively.

I would also like to note that for the first time a woman, Sophie Thibault, received the award for best news anchor.

Among the winners in other categories were: Sophie Lorain and Roy Dupuis for female and male leads in a television series, Élise Guilbault and Denis Bouchard for female and male leads in a television drama, Véronique Cloutier for variety show host, Benoît Gagnon for sports show host and Guy Mongrain for a game show.

I would also like to congratulate all the other winners and nominees. Thanks to them, the quality of our television programming is undeniable. Bravo to all.

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[English]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Carleton, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, if someone sat down and tried to design as an experiment the most exclusionary system of public service hiring and promotion imaginable, it might look something like this.

First, select some skill that most Canadians do not have and declare it essential for many jobs where it serves no work related function. Second, keep tight limits on job training in this skill. Third, demote or transfer any public servant who does not meet the arbitrary and ever-changing goals. Quite frankly, that is exactly what the government is doing with the tough new bilingualism requirements announced last week.

Under these rules 24 million Canadians would be frozen out from all top public service jobs. Which Canadians are excluded? There would be the 57% of francophones who do not speak English, the 91% of anglophones who do not speak French, over 80% of immigrants, and 95% of aboriginal Canadians.

The new rules are unworthy of a country that cares about all of its citizens, including the ones who are not bilingual.

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METEOROLOGICAL SERVICE OF CANADA

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 13 the Government of Canada announced an investment of \$75 million over five years that will allow the Meteorological Service of Canada to improve the quality of its forecasts and service to Canadians in all regions.

As a result of this investment, Canadians will benefit from more accurate and timely weather information, day-to-day forecasts, longer term forecasting, and in the prediction of extreme weather events.

To produce an accurate forecast for any given area, it is not necessary for a meteorologist to be looking out a window at the area to which the forecast applies. That is observation. It tells us what the

S. O. 31

weather conditions are at that particular moment in time. Environment Canada has over 6,000 different kinds of observing sites across the country.

Producing a forecast requires a view that extends many thousands of kilometres in order to see how various weather systems and patterns are developing. Then it takes sophisticated knowledge and equipment to predict the conditions that these systems will produce.

This new funding will enable the staff of the Meteorological Service of Canada to expand their knowledge and use more sophisticated equipment. It will also allow them to strengthen their research capability and deliver better—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

* * *

METEOROLOGICAL SERVICE OF CANADA

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week the environment minister made a decision to cut Canada's 14 weather forecasting centres down to 5. In Winnipeg, public pressure forced him to keep a forecasting capability for now, but we will have to be vigilant to prevent closure down the road.

Over the last 10 years the Liberals have followed an erratic course opening offices and then closing them, cutting 59 weather offices, 3 forecast centres, and making massive cuts to the weather service amounting to 40% of its budget. How short-sighted.

The government's own reports show that our weather forecasting system is in such bad shape that it has put the safety and security of Canadians at risk. We know that forecasting accuracy has dropped, equipment is rusting out or obsolete, personnel are overworked, and staff morale is decreasing.

The Liberal's plan of consolidation is not a solution to any of these problems. In fact, the plan puts Canadian safety in jeopardy, and threatens our economy and the environment. There has been no cost benefit analysis done. There is no recognition that technology and remote forecasting cannot replace the accuracy of human observation and regional experience. There has been no consultation with the employees, their representatives or the public.

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● (1410)

[Translation]

IRAQ

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, along with millions of people around the world, Quebec has proclaimed loud and clear its opposition to a declaration of war against Iraq.

In Quebec, the demonstrations have been impressive. This solidarity shows once again that Quebec is distinct. It is a clear message to renounce war and let the negotiation process and the UN inspections play out unimpeded.

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I participated in the march in Quebec City, which drew 18,000 people, and several of my colleagues did the same elsewhere: in Montreal more than 250,000 people took to the streets; in Trois-Rivières there were 3,000 people; in Alma and Rimouski 5,000 people came out; and in Gatineau 5,200 people took part.

Aware of the imminent possibility of a unilateral declaration of war, people want to send a clear message to the Prime Minister.

By all accounts, the Prime Minister does not seem very receptive, since he refused to meet with the *Échec à la guerre* Collective to discuss Canada's role and the importance of finding a peaceful solution to this conflict.

* * *

[*English*]**ACTS OF BRAVERY**

Mr. R. John Efford (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to congratulate John Dean of Little Heart's Ease, Newfoundland, who nearly four years after he saved the life of his friend and shipmate Levi Avery has been recognized by the Governor General of Canada for his act of bravery.

Mr. Dean and Mr. Avery were fishing from the *Sandra L. Dean* about 130 miles southeast of Catalina on May 29, 1999. They were setting crab pots when Mr. Avery became entangled in the rope that was tied to the pots and dragged overboard into the frigid waters of the North Atlantic. Crew member Randell Smith reacted quickly as he operated the engine controls. Mr. Dean made the decision to go into the water after his friend. The recipient showed exceptional courage in the face of this near fatality.

I would like to ask the House to join me in sending out congratulations and our thanks to this brave individual and all others like him.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Mr. Speaker, the latest Angus Reid survey on the views of Canadians confirms what members of the Progressive Conservative Party have been saying for years: our military requires solid support from the government. In fact, three out of every four Canadians now feel that the defence budget needs to be increased. An even greater majority believes we are not even equipped to defend ourselves any more.

Recently, Canadians saw the *Iroquois* limp home with a broken Sea King aboard. Now the *Iroquois* is headed back to the gulf in the midst of a war minus a helicopter. What will it take for the government to wake up and supply and support our Canadian Forces? When asked how they felt about our military, less than half of Canadians said they felt proud. This is a shame and this is the real legacy of the Prime Minister.

* * *

CANADIAN LEARNING INSTITUTE

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the budget provides \$100 million for the Canadian learning institute. This will be an organization that will help give a national overview of

education and training in Canada. It is my hope that it will help us capture the best practices of education and training developed in the wonderful diverse regions of this country.

It is also my hope that it will help identify and deal with problems in education and access to education wherever they occur. I urge that, among other things, the new institute make a particular effort to focus on community college issues and on the special challenges aboriginal people face in education and training across Canada.

The Canadian learning institute will further strengthen Canada, which already has the best educated population in the world.

* * *

AMBER ALERT PROGRAM

Mr. Chuck Cadman (Surrey North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, last week Elizabeth Smart was rescued after nine months in the hands of kidnappers. Her father is pleading for the U.S. Congress to institute the amber alert program nationally.

Amber alert uses radio, TV, electronic billboards and emergency broadcast systems to immediately alert the public about abducted children whose lives are in peril. Over 70 amber alert programs have been established in the United States since the first one appeared in Texas in 1997. About 40 children have been rescued to date.

About a year ago, Toronto became the first Canadian city to introduce amber alert. Alberta, the first province to adopt the program, has committed resources. Earlier this year, Ontario adopted amber alert. Manitoba and my home province of British Columbia are about to follow suit. Unfortunately, however, provincial programs stop at provincial borders.

A truly effective program must be national. Canadians want the federal government to show leadership by instituting a nationwide amber alert program for the sake of our children.

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● (1415)

[*Translation*]**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today to draw attention to International Women's Day, which was March 8.

Canadian women have, through sustained efforts, taken charge of their futures and have brought our society to where it is today, and will help it continue to advance.

This day offers us an opportunity to focus public attention on women who have influenced others, among them Parasketi Hatzis and Demitra Thomakou. These two Canadians of Greek origin have been involved for more than 30 years in the educational field and have left an indelible mark on their families, their community of origin and the Canadian community as a whole.

We all know one or more such remarkable women who have left their mark on their communities. I join with all my colleagues in this House in paying tribute to all these remarkable women.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTION PERIOD***[English]***IRAQ**

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the situation in Iraq is moving toward imminent crisis and military action. Canadian Forces have been on the ground there for some time. In fact, 150 military personnel are involved in joint command arrangements with British and American troops on the ground. Is this deployment continuing? Will these personnel remain in the event of war with Iraq?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to set out the position of the Government of Canada. We believe that Iraq must fully abide by the resolution of the United Nations Security Council. We have always made clear that Canada would require the approval of the Security Council if we were to participate in a military campaign.

Over the last few weeks the Security Council has been unable to agree on a new resolution authorizing military action. Canada worked very hard to find a compromise to bridge the gap in the Security Council. Unfortunately, we were not successful. If military action proceeds without a new resolution of the Security Council, Canada will not participate.

We have ships in the area as part of our participation in the struggle against terrorism. Our ships will continue to perform their important mission against terrorism.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in the past we have seen nations support a military action without sending forces, but this is the first time we have ever seen a country not support a military action and send forces anyway. What a bizarre position.

Let me get the Prime Minister to answer my first question. We have troops on the ground in the Iraq theatre, with British and American soldiers, being deployed. Are they going to stay there or not?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a certain number of people who are in exchange with the British and the American troops and they are doing some activities there. It is not in a combat situation. I think that they should respect the undertakings they have made to the other governments as their troops are doing that. The number is quite limited. Some are involved in surveillance in planes and so on, and they will carry on their duty that they started some months ago.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I guess we have a government here that is indeed half-pregnant.

The government says it will only support military action if there is a second United Nations resolution, but I will quote from the January 31 edition of the Charlottetown *Guardian*. The Prime Minister said, "...Resolution 1441 will authorize action".

Is he saying today that it does not authorize action or is this yet another flip-flop in the Canadian government's position?

● (1420)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week there was a very important development. The Americans, the British and the Spanish introduced a resolution in the Security Council to authorize action, and it was not voted in, so they have superposed this resolution over 1441, and they did not get the authorization from the Security Council.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it appears that an allied coalition of some 30 countries is about to intervene in Iraq to enforce resolution 1441. A coalition of nations and exiled Iraqis has also been hard at work on plans to build democratic institutions in Iraq, but Canada has largely been left out of these planning groups that are working towards freedom for the Iraqi people. Why has Canada been left out?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a year ago I said to the President of the United States that Canada would intervene in a conflict with Iraq only if we were to have a resolution authorizing intervention by the Security Council. They have known my position and the position of the government since the first day. We have always stuck with that position. Today we have the conclusion that the Security Council does not have a resolution to authorize action, so we are not participating.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Canadian Alliance): He was not paying attention, Mr. Speaker. That was not the question.

It is very clear that Canada has lost influence and is not vitally included in the planning discussions to liberate the people of Iraq, post-Saddam. We are not there because our allies know we have underfunded our military, we are dragging our feet on banning terrorist groups that our allies banned a long time ago, and we have troops over there but we are not going to commit them.

When will the federal government address these unacceptable deficiencies in our foreign policy commitments so that we can restore the international confidence that we once enjoyed?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our commitment to fight terrorism is very well known. We have agreed to send troops, thousands of them, next summer, to fight terrorism in Afghanistan. We will keep our duty to do that.

On the question of Iraq and military intervention in Iraq, we said that we could not participate if it was not approved by a resolution of the Security Council. It is what I said a year ago and am repeating today.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are pleased and supportive of the fact Canada will not take part in this coalition that is not backed by the UN.

Oral Questions

However, the presence of Canadian ships in the Persian Gulf or Canadian soldiers as part of American or British battalions, or even Canadian officers as part of the joint command means that Canada might end up doing indirectly what it does not want to do directly.

It is hard to believe that Canadian soldiers or materiel will not be used in the conflict against Iraq, even if they are there as part of the fight against terrorism.

Would it not be more consistent to withdraw all of the materiel and soldiers from the Persian Gulf and the region?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we still have many soldiers in Afghanistan and we will have thousands there this summer. It is our duty to maintain our presence in the gulf to protect them and to provide them with the materiel they need to carry out their job, to keep the peace in Afghanistan and to try to help rebuild the country.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the joint command in Qatar, which used to be in Tampa, does the Prime Minister seriously think that it will only be involved in what is happening in Afghanistan and ignore the British and American offensive in Iraq?

We know quite well that the joint command will be involved in the intervention in Iraq. It does not take a military genius to figure that out.

My question for the Prime Minister is this: would it not be more consistent and logical to withdraw from the joint command, maintain our troops in Afghanistan, but not allow our ships to be used for purposes other than the operation in Afghanistan?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the mandate of the Canadian military in the region is to take part in activities in Afghanistan only.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the international community as a whole is massively opposed to the use of force in Iraq at this time.

Given that such an aggression, if it took place, would be illegal and illegitimate, does the Prime Minister intend to go further and go to the UN and to the U.S to demonstrate that it would be illegitimate and illegal, and to protest with all his might?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while not sitting on the Security Council, Canada has been more active than any other country in the world in trying to bridge the gap between Security Council members. We have maintained a clear position over the past year, and that has been our contribution to efforts to avert war.

In fact, I myself stated on American television eight days ago that war is not warranted at this time because, to all intents and purposes, Saddam Hussein is completely surrounded; he cannot cause much trouble with 250,000 troops surrounding him. And we must thank—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Roberval.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like the Prime Minister to tell me whether he intends to go any further? I mean, he has some credibility with the United States; he has always stood very close to the American position.

Does the Prime Minister intend to use Canada's status as a neighbour, to now condemn an illegitimate and illegal intervention that is tantamount to an aggression? Will Canada take steps to condemn such a thing?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I clearly stated our position when I set out the government's policy, in response to the first question in oral question period today.

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we welcome the initial clarity of the Prime Minister's responses this afternoon to questions about the possibility of a war in Iraq, but I wonder and I ask if the Prime Minister does not see that the clarity of his position is put at risk by his willingness to leave Canadian forces participating with American units that are participating in the war in Iraq. So I ask the Prime Minister, will he not commit today to withdrawing Canadian troops that are on these particular exchanges in the event of an outbreak of a war with Iraq?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was very clear. The troops that are in that area at this time are helping the Canadian soldiers who are working and will be working next summer on the mission we have accepted to help in the situation in Afghanistan. All the soldiers that are there participate in that. They are not participating in the war against Iraq, if there is a war.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, many times in the House we have asked for a vote, and we always thought we would probably end up voting against the government, but I wonder, given what the government has said today and what the Prime Minister has said today, would he be willing to put down a motion outlining the government's position on the insufficiency of 1441 and the illegitimacy of an attack on Iraq without a second resolution? Put down a motion, let us have a debate and let Parliament express itself on this. Would the Prime Minister not like to have the support of Parliament in his position?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we do not usually put a motion in support of the government. The government has stated a very clear position that all this side of the House is supporting.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the Prime Minister. He said that Canada would support action only if it was justified by a Security Council resolution. He would know that some in Britain and elsewhere argue that that authority exists in both 1441 or earlier resolutions.

Canada would have secured a legal opinion as to whether such an attack is justified in international law. Has the government secured such a legal opinion and does the government believe that such an attack would be justified in international law?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that the leader of the Conservative Party is always very preoccupied about process. He should just listen to what we said. Our position is very clear.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): So, Mr. Speaker, international law does not matter. That is consistent with this government.

Oral Questions

Today the *Wall Street Journal* has outlined a United States plan for rebuilding Iraq after a conflict. The American plan would sideline United Nations agencies and rely heavily on U.S. companies. The Prime Minister would know that any initiative by the United Nations to reconstruct Iraq would require a new Security Council resolution. Is it the position of the Government of Canada that a reconstruction of Iraq after any conflict should be left to the United States? Is the Government of Canada proposing any alternative plan and would the Prime Minister tell us what that plan is?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before reconstruction, we should see if there is a war, but if there is a war of course Canada would participate in reconstruction. It is something we have always done, and we will do it if there is a war, but we still hope that there will be no war. I am not very optimistic, but if there is a war of course Canada will be there to help the victims of the war.

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ETHICS

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, on April 2, 1996, Brian Tobin, then premier of Newfoundland, wrote to the Prime Minister concerning Hibernia. A month later, the Prime Minister wrote back to the premier indicating that the Hibernia matter had been referred to the former finance minister. By that time, Canada Steamship Lines had already received a major contract to work on the Hibernia project. Could the Prime Minister tell the House why the former finance minister was involved in Hibernia decisions?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I said that the former minister of finance followed the guidelines that existed for conflict of interest when he was minister of finance, and never did I receive any information to the contrary. I have said, and I repeat, that he made sure he did his best to follow all the guidelines, and I have never heard any complaints from anybody about it.

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, there is a pattern here that seems to suggest that the former finance minister was regularly involved in decisions that could have benefited him financially. We now know that on at least 12 occasions the former finance minister was consulted, through the ethics counsellor, on matters concerning the health and well-being of Canada Steamship Lines.

Could the Prime Minister confirm today whether any of those meetings pertained to CSL's relationship with Hibernia?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have replied and I will say the same thing. When he was the minister of finance in 1993 he did like the other ministers, he conformed to the regulations that existed at that time. He reported and organized his finances with the registrar general so that he would follow all the guidelines that existed for all the ministers. I never heard any complaint from the registrar general or anybody else about the former minister of finance.

Today I cannot comment more. I never had any complaint from anybody so I cannot today go back to that day. According to what I know, every guideline—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saint-Jean.

[Translation]

IRAQ

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago, the Minister of National Defence said that the ships that were en route to the Persian Gulf could head for Iraq if there were a conflict.

This afternoon, the Prime Minister told us that the ships will just do their job, which is to monitor terrorists in the Persian Gulf. However, Commodore Girouard will lead a flagship, the *Iroquois*, and a tactical group of 20 ships. These 20 ships will surely have to get involved in the theatre of operations in Iraq.

Will the Prime Minister agree that, in order to avoid any confusion, what should be done this afternoon is—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of National Defence.

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, the hon. member should know that this is a multinational operation. It is not just Canada that is there, but France, New Zealand, Greece and the Netherlands are also there.

I am in contact with my counterparts from each of these countries. We are discussing the situation and I have had no indication that these countries will withdraw. For Canada, the war against terrorism is very important. We are fully involved in this respect.

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister's reply is far from reassuring. Basically, if we send a Canadian flagship in charge of a tactical group of 20 ships, it is not true that this is justified by an increased terrorist presence in the Persian Gulf.

What I am saying is that any ambiguity must be avoided. As for the unified command, it is the same thing. We currently have at least 25 Canadian officers working with the Americans on war scenarios in Iraq. To allow these officers to stay there would be completely inconsistent with the statement made today by the Prime Minister. The officers at the unified command should also be called back.

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is not at all inconsistent with the Prime Minister's position. It is precisely the Prime Minister's position. Canada is not the only country involved. As I said, France, New Zealand, Greece and the Netherlands are involved with us in the war against terrorism.

Because of the very sad possibility of a war, the threat of terrorism is greater than before. Would the hon. member want the other countries and Canada to renege on their commitment to fight terrorism when the risk is very high? The answer is no.

Oral Questions

● (1435)

*[English]***MEMBER FOR LASALLE—ÉMARD**

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the former finance minister's company, Canada Steamship Lines, received at least one multi-million dollar contract relating to Hibernia at the same time as the former finance minister was the cabinet's point person on the project; a clear conflict of interest.

Could the Prime Minister tell Canadians how many times the former finance minister excused himself from the cabinet table to avoid these kinds of clear conflicts of interest?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not in a position to reply to all these questions. I know that in some circumstances, rather than handle the file himself he would give the file to the minister for financial institutions to handle the file. I did not keep account of all that. I knew the registrar general was dealing with the problem, there were no complaints and I had confidence in the integrity of the former minister of finance. I did not keep tab of when he was coming in and out of the cabinet and for what reasons.

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, when there are projects that are in a clear conflict of interest perhaps the Prime Minister could put the interests of Canadians first and maybe pay attention when there are these absolute conflicts of interest.

From 1994 to 1997 three Canada Steamship Lines ships were involved in Hibernia's construction. At the same time the former minister of finance was in charge of the federal interest in Hibernia.

Could the Prime Minister tell Canadians whether this conflict of interest was ever investigated at all and, if it were not, why not? Do Canadian taxpayers not deserve better?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have said this before and I will repeat that the former minister of finance always respected the guidelines. No one ever mentioned any problems with that to me, either himself, other ministers or the press. Nobody ever mentioned any conflict of interest in these circumstances.

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*[Translation]***IRAQ**

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the people want peace. This past Saturday's demonstrations have shown that clearly. In Quebec City, 18,000 people assembled, another 250,000 in Montreal, and another 5,000 in Alma. They also want their elected federal representatives to be able to voice their opposition to war through a vote in Parliament.

My question is for the Prime Minister. is this: When are we going to vote?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat in French what I have already said in answer to the hon. member's question.

I wish to make the Government of Canada's position clear. We believe that Iraq must comply fully with the United Nations Security Council resolutions. We have always made it clear that Canada would require Security Council approval as a condition of any participation in a military campaign.

In recent weeks, the Security Council has been unable to agree on a new resolution authorizing military action. Canada has expended every effort in seeking a compromise solution which would close the gap between the various members of the Security Council. This initiative has, unfortunately, not been successful. If military action is launched without a new resolution, Canada will not be part of it. Our ships—

[English]

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

[Translation]

The Speaker: Order please. Not during oral questions. The hon. member for Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, would the Prime Minister not agree with us that the government's position would be a great deal more solid if there were a vote by all members of this House, who have been duly and democratically elected by the population?

● (1440)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is well aware that any action by the government is deemed to have the support of the House of Commons. If the opposition wishes to vote for or against, it has opposition days. But when Parliament announces a policy such as this one, the Prime Minister is entitled to assume he has the support of the House of Commons.

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*[English]***GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS**

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, when the industry minister was in charge of the health portfolio he allowed an untendered contract to go to a Winnipeg Ferrari restoration company for work relating to aboriginal health. The work was actually done by Joanne Meyer, someone well-known to the minister. Why was this untendered contract not given directly to JM Enterprises?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me clarify that the person named Joanne Meyer no longer works in the Department of Health. In fact, her relationship with the department ended in January 2002. It is my understanding that health officials are reviewing at this time contractual arrangements and they will let me know what their review highlights in the coming weeks.

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I notice that minister stands up but there is another minister over there who will end up answering these questions, whether in here or outside.

Oral Questions

I would like to go through this. JM Enterprises had a contract. That contract was suddenly terminated and given to, get this, a Ferrari restoration company in Winnipeg.

The question stands: Why did that contract not go directly to JM Enterprises? What is the minister trying to hide?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, Health Canada officials are reviewing this matter and they will be informing me of the outcome of their review in the days ahead.

At this point it would be inappropriate for me to say anything further other than to confirm that the person in question is no longer employed by the Department of Health.

* * *

FOREIGN AID

Ms. Beth Phinney (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the past Canada has been a strong supporter of emergency relief and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan.

Given the current focus in Iraq, could the Minister for International Cooperation inform the House if the government plans to continue to support the people of Afghanistan?

Hon. Susan Whelan (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government I am pleased to announce that Canada has pledged today \$250 million in new money over the next two years.

This commitment is the largest single country pledge ever made by CIDA and the funding will go to priority areas that are identified by the Afghan government, including humanitarian assistance, security, agriculture and the government itself.

* * *

IRAQ

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have expressed strong opposition to Bush's illegal war, and the Prime Minister is to be congratulated today for respecting that Canadian position.

Would it not strengthen the message from Canada to have the benefit of the full vote of Parliament? Could the Prime Minister advise us whether he has indicated to George Bush that the position the government has clearly now assumed is that Canada will not support the illegal war on Iraq?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the opposition really wants to vote it has two opposition days coming this week. It can decide to take one if this is very important.

The government has spoken and when the government speaks it is because it is confident that it has the confidence of the House. I know I have the support of my party on that.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister did not indicate whether he has clearly communicated the position to the U.S. president that Canada will not support his illegal war.

In addition to addressing that question, will the Prime Minister also send a clear message to George Bush that the problem of

depleted uranium is one that is killing Iraqi citizens today and that it cannot be permitted for the U.S. to inflict further damage by way of depleted uranium on the innocent people of Iraq?

● (1445)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I felt that it was my obligation to inform the House of Commons first and the Canadian public. Of course communications were ready to inform the British and the American administrations about our decision.

* * *

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, I come from Manitoba. I own a 1957 GMC. I have been to a doctor within the last 12 months. Therefore I would have to assume that I meet all the criteria for an untendered health department contract.

My question is for the Minister of Health. Other than oil changes and political grease jobs, what qualifications did Continental Custom Carriage Ltd, an auto restorer, have to be awarded a \$200,000 untendered health department contract? Can we see the terms of reference and can we see the report?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have already indicated, my department is looking into this matter. I obviously await its report in relation to this contractual situation.

I can only underscore again for the hon. member that the named individual involved is no longer employed by the Department of Health.

* * *

FISHERIES

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Mr. Speaker, today the all party committee from Newfoundland and Labrador presented the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans with a report containing a list of recommendations on how to achieve stability and sustainability in the cod fishery, a provincial solution for the people of the province presented by the people of the province.

Will the minister assure the House and all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that in dealing with this crisis he will use the all encompassing approach recommended by the committee?

Hon. Robert Thibault (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member as well as all other members from Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as the MLAs and the people from the three parties and senators for the excellent work they have done in having a non-partisan discussion on a matter that is of great importance to Canada and to those communities. I can assure them that I will study their document very carefully and work with them in all areas where we can find agreement and hopefully it will be in the majority of the areas.

*Oral Questions***CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in February the Federal Court found that the immigration minister misled Parliament. When questioned, he told this House that the decision was only a draft. This month the presiding judge chastised the minister in a rare public statement saying the judgment was final and “not considered a draft”.

Why is the minister still handling critical issues when his word cannot be trusted?

Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): This is a serious matter, Mr. Speaker, so I will not personalize it as the member is doing.

What I am saying is this. First of all when the decision was made, we had already applied the mandamus, so we applied that mandamus for those 102 cases. At the same time we felt that there was room for an appeal based on the content and on the form, so we are going to an appeal.

As a matter of fact I have said since the beginning that under section 74(d) our role is to protect the process. We protect the process. As a matter of fact the same judge certified the question just like we have said. We protect the process but we are respectful of the judicial process too.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, let the record show that the minister did not answer the question at all.

Also, in February the minister was questioned about proven security threat Ernst Zundel. He told this House that he would not allow our refugee system to be abused, “Just watch me”. Zundel's country of citizenship has said officials would travel to Canada at a moment's notice to fetch Zundel, but the minister's word has proven suspect once again.

Why has he not used his legal authority to put Zundel on a plane out of Canada?

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it may be in the interests of some people to indulge in this kind of publicity, but that is not the case for us here. We respect the process and have said right from the start that not only is the individual in question in Canada, but in detention. Let us allow the process to work; we have confidence in it and it will have a positive outcome.

* * *

● (1450)

IRAQ

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the U.S. administration today served an ultimatum to the Security Council. The Security Council is no longer able to support peaceful disarmament or to try to reach a compromise.

Does the Prime Minister plan on letting the U.S. administration know that he disagrees with the situation in which the United States has placed the Security Council? Either the Security Council says it

agrees the U.S. and there is a war, or it disagrees and there is a war anyway.

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe the Prime Minister made Canada's position very clear today in the House. We will not go to war without the support of the United Nations. We will let the American authorities know this and they will draw their own conclusions. I believe that our position is clear and consistent with Canada's longstanding position. That has been the Prime Minister's position from the outset.

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, of course we are happy with the position that Canada has just taken. However, as an advocate for multilateral institutions, Canada cannot accept having the Security Council lose all of its strength, being forced to kowtow to the United States, or become a meaningless body.

What does the Minister of Foreign Affairs plan to do in response to this situation that is threatening world peace?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to do what we have done since the outset. We will work with all of the other countries in the world to build consensus where possible at the Security Council and come up a solution. Obviously, as the Prime Minister said today, it is very difficult to be optimistic, but that does not mean that we will cease our efforts to find peace through the Security Council.

* * *

[English]

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General in her report found that the Canadian firearms program was a major crown project and that the Treasury Board reporting requirements for major crown projects were not followed. Now the minister wants \$172 million more in funding for a program that continues to keep Parliament in the dark on its costs.

Why were the reporting requirements for major crown corporations not followed in the case of the \$1 billion Canadian firearms program?

[Translation]

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have already told the House that according to department officials, the program was never officially designated as such. If that were the case, a decision would have to be made by the Treasury Board. However, it was never officially designated as a major crown project.

That said, I believe that the Department of Justice and the Treasury Board Secretariat agree that more information should be reported to Parliament.

[English]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, just being told to bite the billion dollar bullet is not good enough for Canadians.

Oral Questions

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: I hear hon. members saying they cannot hear. I am not surprised; I cannot. The hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke has the floor and we will want to hear her question.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, since I am unable to get a satisfactory answer from the minister, I will ask the chair of the public accounts committee what the committee is doing to ensure that Parliament is being properly informed on the management of this program.

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to advise that the President of the Treasury Board will be at the committee this very afternoon. We fully expect that we are going to get much better answers than we just had from her right now.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Bob Wood (Nipissing, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the official opening of the Juno Beach Centre in Normandy, France will be on June 6 this year.

The centre, which was developed by a group of World War II veterans who participated in the D-Day landings, will be the first Canadian second world war interactive centre in Europe.

Could the Minister of Veterans Affairs please update the House on the involvement of the Government of Canada in this particular project?

• (1455)

Hon. Rey Pagtakhan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Secretary of State (Science, Research and Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to announce in Winnipeg last Friday that the Government of Canada has decided to provide an additional \$1.775 million toward the Juno Beach Centre project, bringing Canada's contribution to a total of a little over \$3 million.

The funding will help in the completion of the project, in the official opening event and as well, in the creation of an interpretive program.

The Juno Beach Centre project will recognize Canada's overall contribution and achievements during the second world war.

* * *

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, negotiations to settle the softwood lumber dispute have ground to a halt. Fourteen months ago I asked the minister to initiate a cost analysis of the dispute to provide Canadian stakeholders with a framework for negotiations. The government has not done this. Why?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we continue to work very closely with Canadian industry from east to west. We are continuing to work with the provinces. The channels are wide open with the Americans at this moment.

We continue to have a very strong dialogue. However, two weeks ago we came to the decision that negotiations per se were difficult on

the interim measures because the gap was too wide between the two of us. We made great progress in January and February on the substance of the issue and the forestry management programs in our country.

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, there has been no progress at all. The American lumber lobby is in the same place today that it was 12 months ago.

How does the minister expect to get to second base when he refuses to tag first? You are not displaying leadership by sitting in the dugout or cheering from the sidelines—

The Speaker: Order please. I am sure the hon. member is addressing his remarks to the Chair when he says those things.

Mr. John Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I was not talking to the minister. I was referring to somebody in an analogy in a baseball game.

Why is the minister so resistant to completing a cost analysis to provide strong Canadian leadership on negotiations?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is only the member who is saying that the government has not been providing the leadership to the Canadian industry.

For the first time, Canada has not blinked before the Americans. For the first time, we have made progress with the Americans on the softwood lumber issue. It has been two years that Canada has been fighting these duties. It has been two years that we have been working with the secretary of commerce, who has now come to terms with our position and is trying to help. There are senators in the United States on our side asking the American administration to pull with us. That is leadership and progress.

* * *

[*Translation*]

IRAQ

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Canada's decision to maintain officers within the unified command in Qatar flagrantly contradicts our position to not intervene alongside the United States, Britain and Spain.

Therefore, I am asking the Prime Minister: would it not be wiser and more consistent to recall the Canadian officers in this unified command, because we cannot pretend that they are going to deal solely with Afghanistan when there is an intervention in Iraq, and Canada risks losing its credibility by wanting to play both sides of the fence?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can remind the hon. member that, with regard to this group of ships, Canada is not the only country present; there are four other countries, including France.

The American authorities in charge of these ships are concerned not only with Iraq, in the event of war, but also with the war against terrorism. If we are to know what is happening in the war against terrorism, we must be informed. That is our objective.

Points of Order

[English]

TRADE

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade.

The WTO from time to time reviews the trading policies of its members. I want to ask the minister what the WTO has found in its latest review of Canada's trading policies, considering Canada is one of the four largest trading partners in the world. Could the minister tell us what it has found in its review?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indeed the WTO has very good news.

[Translation]

Canada has been recognized by the WTO as one of the most transparent and liberal traders in the world.

• (1500)

[English]

Canada has been recognized by the WTO as one of the world's most transparent and liberal traders. The WTO recognizes that sound economic policies and an outward looking trade regime have allowed Canada to maintain economic growth in the face of a global economic slowdown. We are on the right track thanks to our international policies.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment.

Internal documents from the department tell us very clearly that failure to properly fund Canada's weather stations is putting at risk the safety and security of Canadians because of the lack of access to warning information. The \$75 million announced by the minister last week will not even restore the critical infrastructure requirement.

Will the minister admit that the continual underfunding by his government is causing the consolidation of the weather stations like Kelowna?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member has already pointed out, last week we announced \$75 million more for the Meteorological Service of Canada. In addition, we are carrying out certain reorganization which will increase the efficiency of the service and therefore continue to have our primary objective, the safety of Canadians, paramount and successfully protected in the future.

This is an important reorganization, an important addition of new money. I think the hon. member and other members of the Alliance Party should welcome it.

* * *

[Translation]

IRAQ

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Kofi Annan has stated that the legitimacy of any unilateral intervention

conducted without the authority of the Security Council would be seriously compromised.

Does the Prime Minister intend to advise the President of the United States that he agrees with Kofi Annan and that Canada condemns the American and British intervention?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I could take this opportunity to read the rest of my statement, and answer the question at the same time.

Canada worked very hard to find a compromise to bridge the gap in the Security Council. Unfortunately we were not successful. If military action proceeds without a new resolution of the Security Council, Canada will not participate.

We have ships in the area as part of our participation in the struggle against terrorism. Our ships will continue to perform their important mission against terrorism.

This answers the question pretty well. The remarks I have made were along the same line as those—

The Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the right hon. Prime Minister, but this is all the time we had for oral question period. The hon. member for Calgary Centre, on a point of order.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, I hope the Prime Minister might delay his retreat for just a moment.

The House welcomed, finally, some clarity from the Prime Minister on the government's attitude toward Iraq, but surely, Sir, a statement of that importance should have been given by the Prime Minister on motions or in a formal statement to this House rather than being smuggled into question period in the way that he did it.

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think most members would agree that this intervention has nothing to do with a point of order. Obviously the Prime Minister not only has a right but a duty, which he manifests all the time, of responding very forthrightly to questions from hon. members. Had he not done that today, the same right hon. member would probably have been up asking the Prime Minister why he failed to do exactly what he just did.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to rise in support of the point of order from the right hon. member. While we welcomed the Prime Minister's willingness to make a statement in the House, we have a procedure for that in our Standing Orders. It is called Statements by Ministers. The Prime Minister, instead of trying to smuggle something into question period that would have been properly done elsewhere, should have made a statement under Statements by Ministers, or he could have sought unanimous consent of the House to make a statement before question period or after, all of which would have provided a much better opportunity for the House to deal with this issue.

•(1505)

The Speaker: While I appreciate the points of order that have been raised in the intervention of the right hon. member for Calgary Centre and the hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona and the government House leader, hon. members know that all kinds of things can get smuggled into question period, whether it is in the answers or whether it is in the questions. Perhaps I should say the responses and the questions. I do not want to cause offence.

For this to happen is not an unusual occurrence. While members may have preferred to have a statement instead so there was an opportunity to respond or to suggest that it be done during debates so that there could be a more lengthy presentation of questions and comments and so on, these things are all possibilities, and I am glad they have been mentioned, but unfortunately I do not think they constitute a point of order or a question of privilege at this point in time. Accordingly, we will move on.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

LETTER FROM MEMBER FOR CALGARY WEST—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Mississauga West on February 25, 2003, concerning a letter sent to him by the hon. member for Calgary West.

I would like to thank the hon. member for Mississauga West for having raised this issue as well as the hon. opposition House leader and the hon. member for Calgary West for their comments on the matter.

The hon. member for Mississauga West, in presenting his case, stated that he had received a request from the hon. member for Calgary West to write to the Prime Minister concerning the Falun Gong. The request was accompanied by a draft letter addressed to the Prime Minister from the hon. member for Mississauga West, ready to be signed by him should he decide to do so.

[Translation]

The objection raised by the hon. member for Mississauga West focuses on the fact that this letter was written on House of Commons letterhead. He has expressed disagreement with this approach because, among other things, it seems to give an official seal of approval to what is really only an MP's personal initiative.

[English]

The hon. member for Mississauga West protested that the draft letter, printed as it was on House letterhead, made it more likely that his own position might be misrepresented or taken out of context. All hon. members are acutely aware of the difficulties that may arise when this happens and the Chair agrees that every member of this House has an obligation to ensure that they are not the source of such a misrepresentation, even if done unintentionally or inadvertently.

In the present case, however, I fail to see that any such misrepresentation has occurred, let alone that any aspect of parliamentary privilege is involved. The use of generic House of Commons letterhead on a document submitted to another member for his or her consideration and possible signature hardly seems to

Routine Proceedings

involve misrepresentation or an attempt to interfere with the right of hon. members to conduct the business of Parliament without obstruction.

In past rulings, the Chair has tried to assist hon. members by indicating the limits of parliamentary privilege as it applies to them as individuals. Members who have an interest in this aspect of our rules will find it discussed in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* at pages 71 to 95, and I invite hon. members to revisit those pages for a comprehensive explanation of this issue.

Meanwhile, I can see no infraction of any of our rules in the case now before us and I therefore find that no prima facie breach of privilege or of contempt has occurred in this situation.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

REPORT OF THE ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION

The Speaker: It is my duty pursuant to section 21 of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act to lay upon the table a certified copy of the report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for British Columbia.

[Translation]

This report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

* * *

[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 21 petitions.

* * *

[Translation]

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

Mr. Eugène Bellemare (Ottawa—Orléans, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-408, an act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act (oath or solemn affirmation).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to introduce a bill that would modify the oath of allegiance sworn by members of Parliament when they are elected.

At the present time, we swear allegiance to the Queen. I have no intention whatsoever of calling for the reference to the Queen to be taken out. What I am asking instead is for an addition, a proof of our pride and responsibility toward our constituents, the people of Canada. I therefore wish to add loyalty to Canada to the oath.

Routine Proceedings

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

* * *

• (1510)

[English]

CANADIAN FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE AGENCY ACT

Mr. David Pratt (Nepean—Carleton, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-409, an act to establish the Canadian Foreign Intelligence Agency.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce in the House an act to establish the Canadian foreign intelligence agency. As the only G-8 country without a foreign intelligence agency, Canada has been a net consumer of intelligence rather than a net producer. Today's strategic environment demands that we have our own sources of foreign intelligence to safeguard our own interests and to assist our allies in the war against terrorism.

The introduction of this bill would not have been possible without the hard work of Miss Clare McIntyre, a parliamentary intern in my office, and Mr. Alistair Hensler, a constituent and a former assistant director of CSIS.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present. The first one has to do with the matter of sexual orientation. The petitioners would like to draw to the attention of the House the fact that the current provisions of the Criminal Code of Canada can be effective in preventing true threats against individuals or groups without changes to sections 318 and 319 of the code. The petitioners therefore call upon Parliament to protect the rights of Canadians to be free to share their religious beliefs without fear of prosecution.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is with regard to the issue of the definition of marriage. The petitioners would like to draw to the attention of the House the fact that the majority of Canadians believe that the fundamental matters of social policy should be decided by elected members of Parliament, not by the unelected judiciary. The petitioners therefore call upon Parliament to use all possible legislative and administrative measures, including the invoking of section 33 of the charter, the notwithstanding clause, if necessary to preserve and protect the current definition of marriage as between one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

STEM CELL RESEARCH

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the final petition is with regard to stem cells. This petition is signed by a number of Canadians, including a number from my own riding of Mississauga South, who understand, as I do, that life begins at conception. They would like to draw to the attention of the House the fact that they support ethical stem cell research, which has already shown encouraging potential to provide cures and therapies

for Canadians. They also point out that non-embryonic stem cells, also known as adult stem cells, have shown significant research progress without the immune rejection or ethical problems associated with embryonic stem cells. They therefore call upon Parliament to focus its legislative support on adult stem cell research to find the cures and therapies necessary for what ails Canadians.

IRAQ

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay—Boundary—Okanagan, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions, both dealing with the potential war in Iraq. My constituents point out their concerns about this war and ask Parliament to support a negotiated peaceful resolution to the crisis, to ensure that the crisis is resolved under the auspices of the United Nations organization, to work for an end to the current sanctions against the people of Iraq, and to pursue the establishment of a comprehensive disarmament regime for the region, under strict international control.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Janko Peric (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I have the honour to present a petition with over 500 signatures from constituents in my riding of Cambridge and from citizens of the riding of Brant. The petitioners wish to draw to the attention of the House the fact that the majority of Canadians condemn the creation and use of child pornography and that the courts have not applied current law in a swift and decisive manner. Therefore, the petitioners call on Parliament to take the necessary steps to outlaw all materials that promote or glorify child pornography.

CANADIAN EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COLLEGE

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition on behalf of the people of eastern Ontario and people on the Quebec side requesting that Parliament recognize that the Canadian Emergency Preparedness College is essential to training Canadians for emergency situations, especially now, more than ever, that the facility should stay in Arnprior, and that the government should upgrade the facilities in order to provide the necessary training to Canadians.

• (1515)

IRAQ

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as foreign affairs critic and peace advocacy team leader for the New Democratic Party, I am pleased to table a petition signed by many of my constituents and thousands of other Canadians urging Parliament to uphold international law and say no to any Canadian participation in Bush's illegal war. I think today's welcome announcement shows the importance of citizens mobilizing around something as fundamental as the government making a decision to enter a war.

I hope the government will respect this petition and allow Parliament to strengthen its hands and its voice and allow the government to play an even more important role in yet preventing an illegal, avoidable war against Iraq in the days and months ahead.

*Routine Proceedings***QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 104, 107, 108, 109, 112, 113, 114, 116, 117, 120, 121, 123, 124, 127 and 141.

[Text]

Question No. 104—**Mr. Rob Merrifield:**

With regard to the health impacts on Canadians of breast implants: (a) will the government offer financial compensation for victims of faulty breast implants and, if yes, when will this be available; (b) when will Health Canada release the results of its breast implant cohort study launched in 1996 and promised by the end of 2000; (c) why has this study not yet been released; (d) will the government consider establishing a national registry to track the health status, including adverse effects, of recipients of breast implants; (e) will the government consider establishing a national breast implant user registry to tally the health care costs associated with breast implant users; (f) is Health Canada in possession of information estimating the health care costs associated with breast implant recipients; (g) what is Health Canada currently doing to ensure the safety and efficacy of both silicone and saline implants; (h) is Health Canada assured that women receiving silicone implants through the special access program are properly apprised of the associated risks; and (i) what was Health Canada's reaction to warnings over the years from its Health Protection Branch that breast implants were potentially dangerous?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): (a) The government is not offering financial compensation to victims of alleged faulty breast implants.

(b) Results from this study will be released as soon as possible following the analysis of the data.

(c) The study in question was very large and complicated, involving many different organizations. It took approximately four years to reach the stage where the provinces, Ontario and Quebec, had collected the data and assembled the cohort required. This data was submitted to Statistics Canada for approval of the cohort/mortality/cancer incidence linkage process. In August 2002, Statistics Canada released the linked data to Ontario and Quebec so that the cancer staging information could be added to the linked records.

The analysis team, involving representatives from Ontario, Quebec and Health Canada, met on February 17, 2003. An analysis plan was drawn up and agreed to by all parties. A report will be prepared for public release following the completion of the data analysis.

(d) Health Canada is assessing the feasibility of a national breast implant registry.

(e) Health care costs are tracked by the provincial ministries.

(f) No.

(g) Breast implants are medical devices and must meet the requirements of the *Food and Drugs Act* and the medical devices regulations before being offered for sale. Under this act and the regulations, the responsibility of selling safe and effective medical devices resides with the manufacturer. Breast implants have been placed in the highest risk class of medical devices. These devices undergo the highest degree of premarket review prior to sale.

No medical device sold in Canada is without risk. The degree of remaining risk for any medical device must be balanced with

potential benefit for the patient. The discussion of risk and benefit for any medical treatment is held between patients and their health care provider. The decision is made by the patient in consultation with her physician. Physicians are urged by their professional associations to obtain a signed informed consent before treatment.

(h) The sale of a medical device under part 2 of the regulations, i. e. special access, requires health care professionals to sign a declaration that they have provided the patient with details of the risks and potential benefits of the device. Physicians must also inform patients that the device is being obtained under the special access program.

For each patient receiving a saline or silicone gel-filled breast implant or tissue expander through the special access program, Health Canada has a signed attestation from surgeons involved, as required by section 71(1) of the Medical Devices Regulations, that they have informed the patient of the risks and benefits associated with the device to be used.

Health Canada has requested, obtained and reviewed basic safety data from manufacturers whose breast implants are requested by health care professionals through the special access program.

(i) The department has investigated the potential risks brought to its attention, requesting and evaluating additional information regarding breast implants from their manufacturers. Independent studies and research were conducted into these potential risks and several internal and external advisory committees were struck to investigate the concerns.

A voluntary moratorium on the sale of silicone gel-filled breast implants was put in place in 1992. In 1993 the then Minister of Health announced that these devices could not be sold in Canada until manufacturers were able to address the outstanding safety and effectiveness concerns.

Health Canada has increased the amount of information provided by the manufacturers, through their product monographs, to women considering breast surgery. Additional information has also been provided to Canadian women via the "It's Your Health" publications discussing breast implants and medical devices in general.

Question No. 107—**Mr. John Duncan:**

How many federal government departments have access to the firearms registry and what level of personnel within the departments are allowed this direct access or are allowed to request specific information as to whether or not individuals have ownership of firearms listed on the registry?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Only two federal government departments/entities have direct access to the Canadian Firearms Registration System, CFRS, the Department of Justice and the RCMP, which is an agency of the Solicitor General.

In addition, police agencies and a number of investigative and enforcement branches of federal and provincial government departments have access to Canadian Firearms Registry Online, CFRO, through the Canadian Police Information Centre, CPIC. CPIC is a national police service administered by the RCMP where restricted access is maintained.

Routine Proceedings

The level of personnel with access varies from data entry clerks to the operational managerial level. All personnel with direct access are cleared to a minimum of enhanced reliability. They are governed by federal or provincial privacy legislation. Their ability to enter, change or view data is governed by the system access accorded to them in keeping with their respective duties.

Question No. 108—Mr. Peter Stoffer:

What costs has the government incurred for the strategic sea and airlift involved in deploying Canadian Forces personnel and equipment to operations in Kosovo, including the air campaign, to United Nations operations in East Timor, and to Operation APOLLO and other activities in Afghanistan, specifically: (a) what were the sealift charter costs for all three operations; (b) what were the costs incurred in rental of airlift resources for the three operations; (c) what were the costs for the interception and return of equipment caused by the MV Katie's refusal to return to Canada until payments were received; (d) how much money was spent acquiring precision-guided munitions from Australia for the Kosovo bombing campaign in terms of transportation and what will the return costs be once the weapons are replaced; (e) how much money was spent on strategic air-to-air refuelling to deploy the CF-18 fleet to Aviano, Italy, and to return it to Canada; and (f) how do the costs of leasing or purchasing C-17 or C-130J aircraft compare to the costs of maintaining the CC-130 fleet and of renting United States Air Force, Ukrainian air force and other airlift resources?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):

(a) The total cost of chartering strategic sealift incurred by the Department of National Defence in the following missions were: (a) Kosovo, \$5,140,000.00; (b) East Timor, \$643,500.00; and (c) Op Apollo, \$1,437,015.00.

(b) The total cost of chartering strategic airlift incurred by the Department of National Defence in the following missions were: (a) Kosovo, \$9,481,236.00; (b) East Timor, \$3,645,600.00; and (c) Op Apollo, \$53,474,006.00.

(c) The total incremental cost* was \$2,660,367 and the full cost** was \$6,956,086.

(d) The Department of National Defence did not acquire precision guided munitions from Australia.

(e) The total incremental cost of strategic air-to-air refueling to deploy the CF-18 fleet to Aviano, Italy, was \$61,923.52. The incremental cost to return the aircraft to Canada was \$52,674.79.

(f) A direct comparative cost analysis cannot be made. For fiscal year 2002-03, the incremental cost of maintaining the C-130 fleet is \$4,656 per hour, while the full cost to maintain and operate the aircraft is \$14,478 per hour. In the past the costs to charter the Antonov 124 and the Ilyushin 76 have been \$23,000 per hour and \$10,700 per hour, respectively. The Canadian Forces have had access to C-17s and C-5s under a Memorandum of Understanding with the United States Department of Defense. In these instances the Department of National Defence is charged a rate of \$7,283 per hour to utilize the C-17 Globemaster, and \$16,000 per hour to utilize the C-5 Galaxy.

* Incremental DND cost is the cost to DND, which is over and above the amount that would have been spent for personnel and equipment if they had not been deployed on the task. It is derived from "Full DND Cost" by subtracting wages, equipment depreciation and attrition, and other costs that otherwise would have been spent on exercises or absorbed as part of normal activities.

** Full DND cost is the cost to DND for the operation. Included in this cost are civilian and military wages/overtime/allowances, full costs for petrol, oil and lubricants, spares, contracted repair and overhaul as well as depreciation and attrition for all equipment involved.

Question No. 109—Mr. Peter Stoffer:

Of the approximately 7000 individuals who have been refused gun licenses: (a) how many are due to errors in license form processing; (b) how many are due to multiple, failed attempts by the same person; (c) how many are due to the false flagging of individuals through mistaken identity or improper entry in the Firearms Interest Police database; (d) how many refusals subsequently resulted in the issue of a license; (e) how many individuals have been legitimately refused and how many of these lied on their application in order to apply; and (f) how many of those who have been denied a license have been prosecuted for making false statements on their applications?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): With extensive and continuous background checks on applicants and licence holders, about 9,000 firearms licences have been refused or revoked by public safety officials. That is over 70 times more revocations from potentially dangerous individuals since December 1, 1998, compared to the total for the last five years under the old program.

(a) There are no statistics available for this type of scenario;

(b) This would constitute an administrative rejection which is not included in the 9,000 refusals or revocations;

(c) There are no statistics available for this type of inquiry;

(d) 177 firearms applications within the refusal process subsequently resulted in the issuance of a licence;

(e) 9,000 firearms licences have been refused or revoked. There are no statistics available that indicate how many people have lied on their application form;

(f) The Canadian firearms centre does not have any statistics available on false declarations.

Even though there are no statistics compiled on the accusations or situations of false declarations, it is clearly stipulated in *section 106 (1) of the Firearms Act*:

It is an offence to knowingly make a false or misleading statement, either orally or in writing, or to knowingly fail to disclose relevant information, for the purpose of obtaining a permit, a registration certificate or an authorization.

Every person who commits an offence under Section 106:

(a) is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years; or

(b) is guilty of an offence punishable on summary conviction

Question No. 112—Mr. Garry Breitkreuz:

With respect to the May, 1976 Peace and Security paper distributed by Justice Minister Ron Basford and with reference to the statement on page 41: "At the same time, there has been a steady increase in the number of firearms in Canada. Estimates place the number at over ten million in 1974, with almost one-quarter million added to the stock every year. Most of these firearms are long guns (rifles and shotguns)", what evidence did the department use to produce these estimates, and based on this evidence, how many firearms are there in Canada today?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): The estimate of the number of firearms in Canada referred to in the department's 1976 peace and security paper was produced by Statistics Canada.

With respect to current estimates, the Canadian firearms centre commissioned a third party organization to conduct a survey into this issue and obtained an updated estimate of the number of firearms in Canada in August 2002. A respected market research firm, GPC Research, conducted this survey and the non-partisan public policy forum oversaw and rigorously reviewed its methodology.

In the fall of 2001, GPC Research contacted 21,650 Canadians, achieving a sample size of over 3,000 firearm owners. Based on the results of this study, the number of firearms in Canada was estimated at 7.9 million. The study also confirms that there has been a consolidation in firearm ownership. It shows that the top 3% of firearm owners hold more than one third of all handguns in the country and approximately 15% of all firearms or, on average, 15.5 firearms per owner. For the remainder of the firearm-owning population, the mean number of firearms owned is 2.74.

This survey has a margin of error of $\pm 2.06\%$ at the national level, with a 95% confidence level.

Question No. 113—Mr. Garry Breitkreuz:

With respect to a Statistics Canada survey published in May of 1977 that questioned approximately 65,000 Canadians over the age of 14, living in 31,000 different households, about their ownership and use of firearms and considering the number of firearms manufactured in Canada and firearms import and export records since that date, how many firearms does Statistics Canada estimate are in Canada today?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Statistics Canada does not have the data to support the calculation of a reliable estimate of the number of firearms in Canada today. In particular, business and trade statistics on imports and exports and manufacturing from Statistics Canada cannot be used to produce a reliable estimate of the current stock of firearms in Canada.

In August 1976, Statistics Canada conducted a survey of Canadians regarding their ownership and use of firearms. This survey was sponsored by the federal ministry of the solicitor general. Results indicated that there were almost 2.5 million gun owners aged 15 and over and more than 5 million guns owned by individuals in 1976 (Statistics of Estimated Gun Ownership and Use in Canada, Special Bulletin, Justice Statistics Division, Statistics Canada, May 1977).

The report notes that the results underestimated the total number of firearms in Canada due to the exclusion of guns owned or held by police and military personnel, prisons and penitentiaries, firearm importers and exporters, and manufacturers and retailers. Also excluded were residents of the territories and persons living on Indian reserves. The report notes that the estimate of firearms could have ranged between 6 and 10 million in 1976. The survey was not repeated.

Question No. 114—Mr. Jason Kenney:

Do the health warnings and health information mandated by the Minister of Health pursuant to subsection 3(2) of the Tobacco Products Information Regulations of June 2000 (JUS-601413) constitute the official view of the government?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): The information contained in the tobacco products information regulations represents the official view of the government. In fact, section 42.1(1) of the Tobacco Act requires that all proposed regulations must first be laid before the House of Commons.

Subsection 3(2) of the tobacco products information regulations includes the health warning messages and health information messages contained in the health warnings and information for tobacco products.

The health warning messages help ensure that Canadians are much better informed about the many serious health hazards associated with tobacco products. The regulations also require that smokers receive cessation information or information on tobacco-related diseases on the inside of the tobacco package.

The current labels are the result of approximately two years of intensive study and evaluation. Each health warning and health information message has been reviewed and approved by a scientific panel.

Question No. 116—Mr. Bill Casey:

Since 1993, what is the value in dollars of all Canadian aid and assistance (money, services, personnel) to St. Lucia?

Hon. Susan Whelan (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Canadian official development assistance disbursements to St. Lucia from fiscal year 1993-94 to fiscal year 2001-02 were approximately \$36.3 million.

Question No. 117—Mr. Rick Borotsik:

Can the Minister responsible for Agriculture and Agri-Food provide an estimate of the impact on net farm income of the Country of Origin labelling regime contained within the U.S. Farm Bill on: (a) the beef industry; (b) the pork industry; (c) the lamb industry; (d) the seafood and shellfish industry; (e) the poultry industry; (f) vegetable growers; (g) fruit growers; and (h) peanut producers?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): The answer is as follows:

(i) The comment period provided in the official U.S. federal register notice for the interim voluntary country-of-origin labelling, COL, program ends on April 9, 2003. Upon completion of the comment period, drafting of mandatory regulations will begin through the normal U.S. rule-making process, which will include a proposal and an opportunity for public comment. Mandatory COL is scheduled to be implemented by September 30, 2004. Until this date, COL is a voluntary program in the U.S. As a result of the complexity of the provision and U.S. industry opposition to the measure, widespread implementation of the interim voluntary COL guidelines is not anticipated.

(ii) Poultry is not a covered commodity under the COL law.

Routine Proceedings

(iii) Preliminary analysis of the COL provision indicated that it would have a serious adverse trade effect on Canadian exports of covered commodities to the U.S., for those items that are currently co-mingled at retail with U.S. product, and which now carry no distinction as to country-of-origin. While attempts have been made, it is very difficult to accurately measure the impact on farm income because of the complexity and sheer size of the U.S. agri-food industry, a great deal of uncertainty as to the possible response of the U.S. industry to mandatory COL, the high level of market integration among the U.S., Canada and Mexico, as well as the fact that the U.S. has not yet published regulations for the mandatory implementation of COL. Attempts that have been made to assess the impact of mandatory COL implementation, such as a congressionally mandated USDA study, as well as a study published by the George Morris Center, and most recently a report commissioned by the U.S. national pork producers council, confirm our decision to oppose mandatory COL.

Prior to U.S. farm bill being passed into law, Canada's opposition to COL was articulated at the highest levels. The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food raised the issue with cabinet-level officials (Agriculture Secretary Veneman and U.S. Trade Representative Zoellick) as early as September 2001. Deputy Prime Minister Manley raised farm bill issues with Vice-President Cheney during their meeting on March 8, 2002, and the Prime Minister raised these same issues with President Bush during their meeting on March 14, 2002.

On February 7, 2002, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food again raised Canadian concerns about COL with Secretary Veneman, and on February 12, 2002, he raised the matter with Mr. Paul Cellucci, the U.S. Ambassador to Canada. On March 18, 2002, Canada's ambassador in turn wrote to the congressional conference directors, who were responsible at the time with reconciling the house and senate versions of the farm bill. He detailed our specific concerns with the proposed legislation and insured that copies of these views were also distributed to other influential voices in Washington in order to re-emphasize these same concerns. During an April 2002 trip to Washington with Canadian industry representatives, and in a bilateral meeting with Secretary Veneman on May 3, 2002, held in Ottawa, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food again expressed Canadian concerns that this legislation would disrupt bilateral trade. COL remains a priority issue for the Government of Canada, GOC.

Canada is currently focussing its efforts on marshaling the best-possible case for why U.S. stakeholders should demand the repeal of the COL law, including participation in a private U.S.-based consortium that is anticipated to produce analysis critical of COL from within the U.S. The government of Canada has been working with industry and the provinces to share information and to develop and implement a cooperative, strategic response to have the entire U.S. COL provision repealed before it becomes mandatory.

Consultations are ongoing with industry and the federal-provincial agriculture trade policy committee to share information and to gather input into strategy development. The Manitoba Pork Board, Canadian Pork Council, Canadian Meat Council, Canadian Cattlemen's Association, Canadian Sheep Federation, Canadian Federation of Agriculture, Fisheries Council of Canada and the Canadian Horticultural Council are among the participants in these consultations. Organized under the agricultural policy framework, the agenda of the recent beef value-chain round table that took place on January 27 and 28 in Calgary focussed on coordinating the beef industry's strategy on COL with that of the GOC. In outreach activities,

government officials have made presentations on COL at a number of national industry association meetings as well as to the seafood sectorial advisory group on international trade, SAGIT, C-Trade (i.e. a federal-provincial committee of trade ministries and departments), and broader stakeholder meetings in Mississauga, Moncton and Fredericton and at a meeting in Chicago on COL.

Canada is active in the U.S. domestic debate through trade-advocacy initiatives targeted at provoking the repeal of the U.S. COL legislation. On July 9, 2002, the GOC, in consultation with industry and the provinces, submitted comments to USDA that were influential in shaping discussion in the U.S. in advance of the release of the interim voluntary COL guidelines. Similarly, on January 17, 2003, comments on the interim-voluntary guidelines were submitted to USDA on the "utility" of the measure and on January 21, 2003, comments were submitted on a USDA proposal for information-gathering related to the drafting of the mandatory regulations.

Other targeted advocacy activities in the U.S. have included Assistant Deputy Minister Mark Corey's participation in the trilateral accord meeting in May 14-17, 2002, in Nogales, Arizona, and a meeting in Chicago organized by the province-state advisory group in July 2002, which was dedicated specifically to COL. This meeting brought together U.S. states, provinces and federal government officials from both sides of the border. Canadian embassy and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, AAFC, officials presented Canada's position on COL on the margins of the U.S. farm bureau convention in Tampa, Florida, January 17-19, 2003 and at "Canada Day on Capitol Hill" in Washington on February 5, 2003. Embassy officials are also participating in a U.S. industry-led coalition in Washington and are engaged in other ongoing efforts to have COL repealed.

Bilaterally, Canada made strong interventions opposing COL at the November 15, 2002, meeting of the Canada-U.S. consultative committee on agriculture, CCA. COL is a priority item on the agenda of the next meeting of the committee scheduled for April, 2003. Interventions have been made by Canada on the U.S. notification of COL in the World Trade Organization's technical barriers to trade committee, and will be pursued in future meetings of the Committee and other international forums where appropriate. Development of a formal trade challenge is ongoing as information is made available and milestones are reached on the way to the scheduled mandatory implementation of COL in 2004.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 120—Mr. Rick Borotsik:**

What were the total costs incurred by the Department of Foreign Affairs for the distribution, including Federal Express postal charges, of "A Dialogue on Foreign Affairs"?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): The total cost of mailing the discussion paper "A Dialogue on Foreign Policy" was \$4,323.33, including Federal Express postal charges

Question No. 121—Mr. Mark Assad:

Pertaining to the sale of land by the National Capital Commission: (a) for what purpose and according to what process did the National Capital Commission determine that the sale of land to the Vorlage Ski Club, between September 2, 1992 and September 2, 2002, was necessary; (b) on what date, or dates, in parcels of how many hectares/acres, and for what price per parcel, did the National Capital Commission sell this land to the Vorlage Ski Club; (c) did the National Capital Commission subject this sale to a public consultation; If not, why not; and (d) did the National Capital Commission inform the public about this sale; If so, on what date and by what means; If not, why not?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):
The National Capital Commission informs me as follows:

(a) The 1990 Gatineau Park master plan identified the need for the NCC to rationalize the legal boundary of the park to make it compatible with the various natural or geographic realities and to simplify daily management and park administration. As a result, several land parcels were severed from the park that no longer had a role in achieving the NCC's mandate and were not essential within the context of the federal land use plan.

Following the 1993 construction of the Wakefield by-pass portion of autoroute 5, three (3) parcels of vacant land, totalling an area of approximately 50.35ha and also an improved parcel of approximately 62.5ha, which was being leased to Vorlage Ski and Recreation Area Limited, were severed from Gatineau Park. Vorlage Ski and Recreation Area Limited purchased the lands for the purposes of continuing the ski centre's operations and activities.

The proposed disposals were consistent with the environmental impact assessment performed for the transaction and approval was given under the federal land use process.

The NCC has legislative authority for the disposal pursuant to subsection 15(2) of the National Capital Act and subsection 99(2) of the *Financial Administration Act*.

(b) On November 17, 1994, the NCC sold approximately 112.85 ha of land to the Vorlage Ski and Recreation Area Limited at a price of \$296,616. This land sale comprised three parcels of vacant land, totalling approximately 50.35 ha, and of an improved parcel of leased land to the club totalling approximately 62.5 ha.

During the original transfer in 1994, an inadvertent omission of a part of the Vorlage Ski Club property occurred in the legal description. As a result, on November 8, 1995, the NCC completed the sale by transferring a parcel of vacant land having an area of approximately 0.3876 ha. It was sold for a nominal consideration to the Vorlage Ski and Recreation Area Limited since it was part and parcel of the original land description and the NCC had already been paid for the land.

(c) and (d) The NCC did not submit this sale to public consultation and did not inform the public about the sale since Vorlage Ski and Recreation Area Limited was the adjacent owner, it was already leasing over 55 % of the Vorlage Ski Club property and it owned the improvements situated on the leased parcel. These improvements were built by different tenants for purposes of operating the ski club, as early as 1963 and with NCC approval. However, the 1990 Gatineau Park master plan, which recommended a review of the park legal boundary in the

context of a rationalization of park properties, was submitted to public consultations

Question No. 123—Mr. Mark Assad:

What are the full terms and conditions of the development agreement between the National Capital Commission and the Grand Beach Ski Corporation concerning the Camp Fortune ski facility?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):
The National Capital Commission informs me as follows:

The terms and conditions for the development of the facility are as follows:

The agreement provides for an emphyteutic deed (whereby 3133591 Manitoba Ltd, o/a Ski Fortune, owns the facility for a fixed period and returns it the NCC upon expiry) for a term of 25 years commencing July 1, 1994 to June 30, 2019. An audit will be conducted by both Ski Fortune and the NCC in year 20 of the deed, and Ski Fortune must return all improvements to the NCC in the same condition as evidenced by the audit

Ski Fortune is to assume all risk and expense related to its project to construct a new chalet, an addition to the Skyline Lodge, renovations to the Alexander Lodge, maintenance of Fortune Lodge for user groups, demolition for various structures on the lands, site clean-up of old equipment and machinery, trail improvements to the Skyline, Fortune, Alexander and Meech areas, uphill lift capacity improvements as well as snowmaking system improvements, and any other improvements to the lands.

Ski Fortune shall submit an annual business plan each June 30th over the agreement period, detailing any proposed additional improvements and operation of the project for the next following deed year. Any improvements will be subject to an environmental assessment and federal land use approval, and must be in conformance to the Gatineau Park master plan, all applicable municipal, provincial and federal laws, by-laws and regulations and applicable municipal zoning. As well, any existing and additional improvements must not diminish the value of the lands. The NCC will have 45 days from receipt of the annual business plan to complete its review.

All and any improvements done to the Camp Fortune ski facility must be submitted to the NCC for approval before any work can commence and must abide by the schedule as detailed in the annual business plan.

These improvements will become the property of the NCC upon expiration of the agreement and Ski Fortune will not be entitled to any compensation as such.

Ski Fortune must obtain and pay for all of the permits required for the construction, reconstruction, modification and operation of any existing and additional improvements to the lands.

Routine Proceedings

Ski Fortune must also post a performance security of \$250,000 to secure the construction of the new chalet. This security will remain in place until substantial completion of the chalet. A performance security, in the amount of 25% of the value of the work, must also be posted for any construction, replacement, reconstruction, installation or modification of other additional or existing improvements to the lands approved by the NCC. The NCC may waive any performance security at its discretion.

Question No. 124—Mr. Mark Assad:

Concerning the July 15, 2001 fire at the former residence of Roderick Percy Sparks at 420 Meech Lake Road, why did the National Capital Commission not press the authorities to conduct an investigation?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):
The National Capital Commission informs me as follows:

Under the conditions of the original lease to Roderick Sparks dated 1971, and the renewals thereof, and the conditions of the lease to Robert Sparks dated April 1989, and the renewals thereof, the tenant was responsible for all maintenance and repairs.

At the request of Robert Sparks, the lease was terminated at the end of November 2000. The property remained unoccupied after November 30, 2000. Mr. Sparks remained responsible until April 15, 2001, to thoroughly clean and remove all chattels and personal property of every kind and description from the lands and premises, including all accumulated refuse, garbage or other waste material.

The property remained unoccupied after November 30, 2000, since the structures had deteriorated beyond economical repair. Given the condition of the buildings, the NCC intended to demolish these buildings and renaturalize the site. In January 2001, Minto Properties Ltd., as agent for the NCC, applied for federal land use approval, FLUA, for the demolition of all structures and renaturalization of the site. This property was reviewed by FHBRO (1989) and classified as non-heritage.

Unfortunately, the buildings were destroyed by fire on July 15, 2001. The NCC then proceeded with the necessary site clean up, restored the site to a natural setting and integrated the lands with the conservation lands of the Gatineau Park portfolio.

In cases where derelict buildings are destroyed by fire, especially when the fire is an isolated event, the NCC does not pursue investigations as to the cause of the fire. The NCC understands that both the fire and police services of the local municipality filed a report on the incident. The NCC has given permission to the municipality, upon receiving an official request, to release the police report to the requestor.

Question No. 127—Mr. Loyola Hearn:

How much does the government receive annually in civil aviation and airspace charges for the use of airspace over the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador?

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): The setting and collection of aviation enroute terminal and overflight fees is the sole responsibility of NavCanada, the not-for-profit provider of air navigation services in Canada. The federal government is not a party to these fees, and as such, receives none of the fee revenue for use of airspace over the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Question No. 141—Mr. Gerry Ritz:

For all polling by Ekos Research or any of its affiliates and paid for by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in calendar years 2000, 2001 and 2002: (a) what specific questions were asked; (b) what was the total contract amount paid for each respective poll; (c) what written analysis was provided following the results of each poll and (d) what was the total number of people contacted for each poll?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):
The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation informs me as follows:

- (a) Questions included in polls conducted by EKOS Research under contract with CBC/Radio-Canada (usually in partnership with other media organizations) and published via CBC/Radio-Canada's services are posted on its websites or through links to the EKOS websites and are therefore readily available for scrutiny by the public.
- (b) CBC/Radio-Canada is unable to release this information as prescribed by the confidentiality clauses contained in the contracts with the supplier, EKOS Research, and by confidentiality agreements with other media partners.
- (c) The written analysis available to the public under the terms of contract with EKOS Research is posted on the websites of CBC/Radio-Canada and/or EKOS Research as per answer (a) above. Additional information may be obtained by contacting the supplier, EKOS Research, directly.
- (d) Samples sizes for polls conducted by EKOS Research under contract to CBC/Radio-Canada vary in accordance with the parameters of each poll, but are never lower than 1000 people for national samples.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 110, 111 and 122 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: The questions enumerated by the hon. parliamentary secretary have been answered. Is it agreed that Questions Nos. 110, 111 and 122 be made orders for return?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 110—Mr. Gilles Duceppe:

With respect to each of the grants and contributions made by the Canada Economic Development for Quebec since 2000-2001, can the government: (a) provide the name of the recipient organization; (b) indicate the date; (c) specify the amount of the grant or contribution; (d) indicate whether or not it was repayable; (e) specify the name of the program in question; (f) give the name of the federal constituency in which the recipient organization is located; and (g) provide a brief description of the purpose of the contribution or grant?

(Return tabled.)

Question No. 111—Mr. John Williams:

With regard to performance pay for public servants in the Executive (EX) category and the Deputy Minister (DM) category in fiscal year 2001-2002: (a) for each department, agency or Crown corporation, how many employees received performance pay, broken down by EX category (e.g. EX-1, EX-2, etc.); (b) for each department, agency or Crown corporation, how many employees are there in each EX category; (c) for each department, agency or Crown corporation, how many employees received performance pay, broken down by DM category (i.e. DM-1, DM-2, etc.); (d) for each department, agency or Crown corporation, how many employees are there in each DM category; and (e) for each department, agency or Crown corporation, what was the total amount paid out in performance pay?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 122—**Mr. Mark Assad:**

Besides the land sold to the Vorlage Ski Club, the National Capital Commission sold a number of lots within Gatineau Park between September 2, 1992 and September 2, 2002: (a) for what purpose and according to what process did the National Capital Commission determine that the sale of that land was necessary; (b) on what date, or dates, in parcels of how many hectares/acres, for what price per parcel and to whom did the National Capital Commission sell this land; (c) did the National Capital Commission subject this sale to a public consultation; If not, why not; and (d) did the National Capital Commission inform the public about this sale; If so, on what date and by what means; If not, why not?

(Return tabled)

[*English*]

Mr. Geoff Regan: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[*Translation*]

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

SITUATION IN IRAQ

The Speaker: I have received a notice of motion pursuant to Standing Order 52 from the hon. member for Mercier.

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, these are extremely tense times internationally. What is more, this morning we learned that the United States and Great Britain had withdrawn their resolution, which was opposed by 11 members of the Security Council. Instead, they served an ultimatum to both the Security Council and Saddam Hussein.

Under the circumstances, and given the announcement made in the House by the Prime Minister and the dangers involved in an attack in Iraq, and given that this intervention will be both illegal and illegitimate, it is important that members of Parliament have the opportunity to make their views known.

My hope is that we will also have the opportunity to vote on this matter, and I hope that, somehow, this hope will become a reality. However, this evening we must be able to make our views known, at least. We know that back in our ridings, where we have spent the last two weeks, people are worried, men, women and young people. They want to know what the consequences of a possible war are, what the link between this war and the fight against terrorism is. They want to know what the humanitarian repercussions will be.

And parliamentarians must be able to make their views known on these issues. I am sure that all members have heard from people who have expressed their concerns and who are just as worried as people in my riding and my colleagues' ridings.

For all these reasons, I ask that the House hold an emergency debate this evening, or whenever the Chair sees fit, but as soon as possible.

Budget

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for her suggestion. Pursuant to Standing Order 52, I cannot hear from other members on this topic. The hon. member for Mercier was the one who submitted the motion and she is the one who has the right to speak at this time.

I have decided to allow the debate requested by the hon. member. This evening, pursuant to Standing Order 52, there will be an emergency debate on the issue that she has raised.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1520)

[*Translation*]

BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

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

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was supposed to be sharing my time with the hon. colleague for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve. However as you know, committees start at 3:30 p.m. Therefore, my colleague will not be able to address the House today. However, I would like to express his commitment to his community and his riding, which has a high rate of poverty and many people who live below the poverty line, as is the case in some areas of my riding.

Commenting on the budget involves taking stock of the various measures implemented by the federal government and the impact they have on everyone. In terms of budgetary initiatives, we must also keep a constant watch on the federal government, which is forever trying to interfere in provincial jurisdictions or to implement inflexible programs that are ill-suited to the needs and realities not only of Quebec and the provinces, but also of regions and—by extension—communities.

There needs to be decentralization, and this suggests flexibility, which is certainly not part of the federal initiatives. The Liberals changed minister, but not mentality. The mentality of hiding surpluses, underestimating revenue and overestimating spending continues to prevail in this Parliament. Clearly, the minister has changed, but not the mentality. This mentality of the Ministers of Finance is entrenched with the federal Liberals. We can see it in all the initiatives that were proposed by the federal government in the provincial jurisdictions.

The primary objective of a budget is to announce significant measures to improve life for the public. Many stakeholders with an interest in public finances, including the media, have summed up this budget as a scattering of small handouts in all directions and a lot of interference. These are measures that were taken without any regard for the various challenges facing communities in Quebec and other provinces.

There has been a lot of criticism. I will share some from my riding and my region. The mayor of Quebec City, Mr. Allier, said the budget was a handful of goodies.

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In terms of the infrastructure program, we need to look at what was announced. The federal government has had a propensity for the ten years we have been here to announce measures not only over two or three years but over more than ten years. Figures can, for example, be pulled out of a hat, like one billion or two billion, but when we look at the annual breakdown, it works out to little goodies or small crumbs.

With regard to infrastructure, Jean-Paul L'Allier, the mayor of Quebec City, felt that the federal government was not living on the same planet as other elected representatives. He recalled that both the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Union des municipalités du Québec had, however, made representations to Ottawa with regard to the urgency of doing significant repairs to Canadian infrastructure.

This meant, therefore, looking at the needs in different regions. The situation is disgraceful, all the more so because the federal government is stockpiling its surpluses without knowing what it intends to do with them.

The federal government's initiatives under the infrastructure program are considered, therefore, largely insufficient. Other stakeholders at other levels have made their positions clear. Richard Dagenais, of the ACEF du Québec, also agrees that the budget is filled with overly weak measures. Increasing the RRSP limit is good for one class of the population, but who can afford to save more than \$18,000 in RRSPs, which is the limit? Clearly, when it comes to the most economically disadvantaged, the federal government just will not agree to try to help them.

Business is also concerned. It felt that the federal government had taken a piecemeal approach and invested millions and billions of dollars in expenditures that, in short, could be bad for the economy.

• (1525)

So, before moving on to more specific criticisms of certain measures taken by this government, I would first like to address the matter of encroachment into areas of provincial jurisdiction, and in this case on Quebec society.

First, this creates administrative chaos, wasted energy, and wasted time. It often delays application of various measures taken by the federal level, which all too often has not consulted the provinces. I recall the last budget with its announcement of a measure to help the homeless, a measure that was absolutely ill adapted to the situation in Quebec. We know what had to be done in order to adapt this funding to the way things were done in Quebec and to the urgent needs in Quebec, and it was not the way proposed in the last budget. Implementation was therefore held up, and the money was delayed in getting to those who had a crying need in this area.

This is a wall to wall approach that ignores regional realities, ignores the day to day realities of the population. It is, therefore, a centralist vision, and that has never been a winning formula in Quebec. It has, moreover, been highly criticized by all the parties in Quebec. It is an approach that is too centralist, and one that is evidence that Canada often ignores the realities of Quebec.

Another general criticism, as I have already said, is those fat figures, which they announce so proudly but which have no impact. The announcement of a \$3 billion budget for the infrastructure

program sounds good when one hears the figure. But the first impression soon fades when one reads further on that this is spread over ten years.

Broken down, this works out to \$300 million a year for the ten provinces, or \$25 million a province, which is a lot less generous than it seems. It is not \$25 million but \$1 billion that Quebec needed a year to update its water supply, sewers and highways. Knowing that one kilometre of highway costs \$1 million, you can imagine how far we will get with this measly \$25 million a province. It is not very much.

It looked like a generous budget for the provinces in terms of infrastructure but, in fact, the numbers tell a different story.

Employment insurance is another issue. We know how the Bloc Québécois battled for employment insurance. We remember the debates in this House. All the members of the Bloc Québécois and my colleague from Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, who was the critic on this issue, fought to have the employment insurance fund independently managed by those who contribute to it, namely workers and employers.

We know that this fund is the federal government's slush fund. Sums of money are taken from the employment insurance fund and put into the consolidated fund or invested in management funds where Parliament does not have control over the spending.

There will be a three to four billion dollar surplus this year alone. It is a disgrace. This manoeuvre will be used again this year to divert money to the Treasury Board. They will dip into the pockets of workers. In the meantime there are people who do not qualify for employment insurance because the eligibility requirements have been changed and too many workers are unable to contribute as a result.

• (1530)

The government is using funds from the EI account for other, much less transparent purposes. This is no longer an insurance scheme for the unemployed, and neither are government surpluses.

Those who pay into the EI fund feel they have been wronged by the federal government because of this practice. No independent fund has been announced. One would have thought the federal government could have established such a fund for the sake of transparency, to give the unemployed control over the management of the fund.

We have worked on this file. I worked along with my colleague from Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques. I was the deputy critic for human resources development, so I am aware of what has taken place. We have worked in cooperation with the various local groups, with the people who make contributions. We wanted this fund to be independently managed.

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In this budget, the government could have shown audacity, responsibility and fairness to those whose pay into the fund, including businesses and employers, whose contributions are substantial. We know full well that the government is not paying a cent into the fund anymore. While not paying into it, however, the government reserves the right to manage the fund as it pleases.

I can understand why the public is fed up with politicians in general and those in power in particular. When in opposition, they claim rights, but once in office, it is well known that they do not have the courage to act on what they condemned when they sat across the floor of the House.

We can say that, in this budget, a 22 cent reduction was announced with respect to contributions to the EI fund. Given that a 20 cent reduction had been announced previously, the reduction is really only 2 cents. There is no reason to boast about a 22 cent reduction when that is not the reality. It is a 2 cent reduction.

We can agree to this reduction. But if the government is going to use it for other purposes as it pleases, it should also bear in mind that this fund was designed for workers who have the misfortune of losing their jobs. The only way to go through a difficult stretch is to be able to rely on an insurance scheme providing just enough money to live on and to fulfil one's obligations.

I am not giving the Liberal government a very good mark with regard to the employment insurance fund. The criteria could have been relaxed and an effort made to see how to improve the lives of thousands of Canadians and Quebeckers.

There is a great desire for a fund that would belong to the workers. Our Minister of Finance took his cue from his predecessor, the future Prime Minister of Canada, who is the hon. member for LaSalle—Énard. The new Minister of Finance is also dipping into the same taxpayers' pockets.

There is also another measure to fight the deficit, the imposition of a special gasoline tax. This tax had been anticipated. We had hoped that, in this budget, it would have been abolished, given the surpluses created by the employment insurance fund and the special gasoline tax. The decision was made to keep it. The government could still sit on these surpluses and help itself to the hard-earned money of the same taxpayers.

The workers are putting money in the employment insurance fund. The federal government is taking this money and giving it to the Treasury Board. It is the same thing with the gasoline tax.

At the same time, families are getting poorer, and it is very difficult for them to maintain a decent quality of life. We know full well that this tax has an impact on how they live. We know full well that many people live under the poverty line or work for starvation wages that barely allow them to make ends meet.

The cost of fuel oil is rising. It is twice as expensive as it was 18 months ago. It has gone from 39¢ to 62¢. That is why the gasoline tax, the fuel oil tax, really hurts taxpayers.

• (1535)

As far as I know, there has been no change in contributors' incomes. We know very well that people's earnings are not going up

as fast as the cost of living, so they could have gone a little easier on people. We know how cold this winter has been. People's bills have doubled but their wages will not. Living conditions will not improve. Monthly budgets have felt the pressure of heating oil costs. People have certainly had to choose between food and heat. This winter has been unusually cold. This past month has seen particularly low temperatures of minus 40 degrees. At the end of the month, the bill has to be paid. The houses in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, where these people often live, are poorly insulated, so heating is very expensive.

It makes no sense to keep draining off so much money; the amount of this tax is unacceptable. They have managed to reduce the deficit over the past four years, so they could have been more generous.

I have already referred to the federal government's propensity for invading areas of provincial jurisdiction. I have a whole list here with me, a compilation of the federal government's intrusion into areas of provincial jurisdiction: health information technology, early childhood education, day care—

The Canadian Learning Institute has just been created, and one of its key objectives is to broaden and enhance the data available on education and learning, and thus to remedy the shortcomings observed in the education field.

Consultations with the provinces, territories and other stakeholders are currently under way on the institute's mandate, structure and administration. If that is not trampling into areas of provincial jurisdiction, what is? Education is a provincial jurisdiction. They are showing just how generous the federal government is by using the money from the EI fund, the money from the gas tax, the money they have acquired by intrusion into provincial areas of jurisdiction.

This is an example of the kind of scattered approach we are talking about. There are other ways of helping the provinces through the social transfer. There are other ways that can be used, by being more generous with the overall tax base, so that provinces can meet their responsibilities, which as far as we are concerned at this time are education and health.

Therefore, there are 28 areas of provincial jurisdiction in which the federal government is interfering at a cost of \$4 billion. There is health care in each community. Who provides health care if not the provinces? There is also the community action partnerships, strategic infrastructure: \$2 billion over 10 years. I read various comments by different municipal representatives. They do not even know what this means. Not enough information was provided about this. There is the cost of research, northern science research, the Canadian Foundation for Innovation; that is a good one too. There is the National Research Council, the Canada Student Loan Program, the increase in the National Child Benefit Supplement, etc.

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Why not give the money in a global budget? The provinces could perhaps be more generous in their administration of the funds and give them to their communities. It is too difficult for the federal government to understand that reality.

The public is also concerned. In any case, there is a concern with the federal government's propensity to infringe in other jurisdictions. It will take time before the public has access to all these programs. How many of them apply to the different regions was not considered.

• (1540)

Every time people come to see me at my office they say, "We are never entitled to federal programs because we never meet the right criteria". Often it is very frustrating because very little money is given. There are also fewer people who are entitled to it. What this means is that we missed out on federal programs because we were not eligible for them. Yet the money was there. There were \$300 million programs and some \$20 million programs.

I think the budget that is currently being considered has been met with general dissatisfaction by the public and by those who thought there could have been initiatives that were much more in tune with Quebec's needs.

[*English*]

Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague talks about intrusion on provincial jurisdiction. I find it rather interesting that seven or eight years ago the Bloc never mentioned fiscal imbalance when we had a \$42.5 billion deficit. Now that we have surpluses, we have fiscal imbalance.

The member talks about intrusion on provincial jurisdiction. The \$2,000 scholarships for Masters or Ph.D. programs do not intrude on provincial jurisdictions since they go directly to the students. The fact is that people in Canada, particularly in the Province of Quebec, are interested in governments working together more co-operatively to solve problems, whether it be health care or anything else.

My question for the hon. member is this. The member talks about the fact that we should just bundle up all the dollars, send them to Quebec and it will know how to manage them. We saw problems with that, such as money for diagnostic equipment, like MRIs, was used for bedpans, et cetera. There was no accountability. We want to see accountability.

Could the member tell me how it is more accountable to bundle up moneys to a province rather than have it designated so we can see where in fact the money goes?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, the member says there were deficits. That is because the budgets were poorly managed. As is the case right now, money was handed out right and left, programs were created and several millions of dollars were given to friends of the party who had not even worked on communications. Millions of dollars were handed out.

We have to look out for that. With respect to health, look at the billions of dollars that were cut from the Canada social transfer. I do not have all the figures with me but members will remember the

saga. We were here in 1993. We saw the government cut funding to the provinces, who in turn were unable to meet their responsibilities.

Quebec set aside some money. Afraid of being unable to cover its annual commitments, it was forced to put some money aside to be sure to have at least enough for the hospitals and all the agencies that run the health sector in Quebec.

We should be careful about what my colleague just said. There are a great many details that need to be explained regarding his comments. Regardless, we know that health is an issue that everyone cares about. People are concerned. Everyone knows where the federal government fell short in terms of supporting the provinces.

The same thing is being done right now in education. A look at the programs outlined in the current budget show that the government wants to hand out millions of dollars. This means that more could have been put into the Canada health and social transfer. The government has enough set aside to hand out goodies. Why not increase transfers to some of the provinces so they can better meet their needs?

That is what is happening; the federal government is giving less and less, is cutting itself a bigger piece of the pie and making the provinces take the blame for not having provided enough funding.

There was quite a tug of war when it came to the program for health care funding. We won the battle, and came back to funding levels that the federal government had to provide for the provinces. The Premier of Quebec, Bernard Landry, was the one who led the charge. All of the other provinces agreed.

How dare the government say that the provinces were not able to deliver the goods, when they had no money.

• (1545)

[*English*]

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, from time to time in the House we hear about EI, as my hon. colleague just raised.

I am certainly not here to defend the government in the debate on EI premiums but I have been told that most of the people employed are employed by an employer who has around 10 people. My constituency is full of small employers and nobody in the House ever gives them recognition or any credit. They too contribute to EI and to CPP. I am not saying that the workers do not but why is it that nobody on either side of the House ever mentions the contribution made by the small town business person? It is a shame that we do not do that. We just talk about the contributions of workers.

I am not defending the government, because it was not unemployment insurance, it was an unemployment tax as it turned out because it went into general revenues. However let us not forget the small employers who employ 10 people or less and do not get any credit whatsoever in the House.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for raising the issue. When I spoke earlier, I also spoke about the businesses and employers who contributed to the EI fund.

That is why we want a separate fund, a fund that would take into consideration those who contribute to it, which means employers and employees, the workers. I am coming at this from just about the same perspective as my colleague who asked me the question.

Therefore, we feel it is imperative that this fund be managed by all those who contribute to it. I agree that employers contribute a great deal together with employees and should be involved. This is a fund, and because of that, we feel it should be managed by those who have contributed to it.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join in the debate on the budget. I listened with great interest to what colleagues on both sides have said today.

I would like to talk about the education, training and research parts of the budget. However before I do that I would like to make it clear that I do understand that the budget is a very remarkable whole, that the different parts of it fit together in a very unusual way.

Strengthening the economy is contained in the budget. My colleague just mentioned one aspect of it. For example, small business has been greatly strengthened by the reduction in the capital tax and by the changing definition of small business from \$200,000 to \$300,000. Small business people in my riding have complimented me on that. That is one example of the way the economy is strengthened through this budget.

The paying down of the debt has also been mentioned today. This is not something that I often talk about but I am pleased that we are approaching the paying down of almost 10% of this enormous national debt that we inherited from many decades of spending. I am glad the government is chipping away at that. I was particularly pleased to see in the budget that we have now patriated 82% of the debt. We only owe 18% of it overseas and we owe 82% of it to ourselves. If we are going to be in debt, it seems to me that the best way to be in debt is to be in debt to ourselves or to members of our family. That is a great improvement.

The economy is strengthened by those fiscal actions. It is that fiscal soundness that has allowed us, at last, as a federal government, to start doing some of the things that a national government should do, and that is to make investments in the important aspects of Canadian society.

Many people speak of this budget as a health care budget, not only because of the huge sums of money which are now being recommitted to health care after very difficult times, but also because of the vision that has accompanied that reinvestment, the

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vision that was generated by the Romanow report, which captured the views of the country and which this budget put into place.

For example, emphasis on supporting primary care is included in the budget, and that is extremely important. Also important is the emphasis on home care and the emphasis on the catastrophic cost of drugs where a family is simply overwhelmed by the cost of one drug that a family member has to have. I am not against investing money in the health care system but it is the way investments have been made. I think this is fine.

Improving the lot of aboriginal people is also in the budget. Despite the international situation, our economy is doing extraordinarily well and yet here is this identifiable group, the aboriginal peoples, who have been in Canada for 10,000 years and in some cases more, identifiable by their poverty, by the levels of certain types of illness that exist in their communities, by the low levels of education and the high dropout rate from high school and so on. I am pleased to see that we are investing in that area.

Improving the lot of children is also included in this budget. We have worked in recent years toward improving the lot of seniors and, goodness knows, we have a way to go in that area. Last year for the first time in Canada there was a tiny improvement in the index of child poverty. I believe that tiny improvement came from our establishment of the child tax benefit. In this budget we have increased the child tax benefit to \$3,200 for the eldest child with less for further children, plus \$1,800 in the case where a child is disabled. I hope that as that investment flows through we will see further improvements in the measures to combat child poverty across Canada. In a country as rich as this we should not have children in poverty.

● (1550)

The budget also moves toward improving child care. The federal government has put its money on the table and has asked the provinces to join it in developing quality child care across the country. I like that.

My colleague mentioned the EI and said that it was a tax of some sort. We tend to forget that the EI was used in previous budgets to develop our system of parental leave, where the parents of a newborn child, between them, can take extensive leave so that in those critical years of life the child can be properly looked after. I am glad the EI funds are being used for that.

This time, the further addition, a modest first step I would say, is the palliative leave under the EI program. Under the budget people who are taking care of relatives who are dying can take up to four weeks of leave under this program. They can take, for example, a week now, a week in a month's time or different weeks at intervals but they can also take the whole month. I am delighted with that.

We have the investments in the environment, Kyoto and climate change, and the extraordinary investments in the parks. I noticed last week that the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans announced Canada's first real under-ocean park. People tend not to realize that we are responsible for 50% more of the huge land area we are very conscious of. In three oceans we are responsible for the under-ocean areas. In this budget provision is being made for marine parks, as well as an expansion of our wonderful system of national parks.

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We also have the investment in foreign aid. I was so pleased to see us at this time, when people are viewing Iraq and thinking in terms of war, that we would once again, at last, increase our contribution to foreign aid, particularly to Africa, and to countries which have been devastated by AIDS.

As I said, my main purpose this afternoon is to talk about education, training and research in the budget. It is interesting that measures in this area of education and training and of research pervades most parts of the budget. It is interesting and perhaps surprising to some people but if, for example, we think of health care, it is important right now to deliver health care to the sick. However if we do not have research and we do not have proper education and training, in the end the system will founder. We have to keep training.

We have a shortage of physicians. One of the ways to solve that is to train more physicians. We have a shortage of nurses, particularly nurses of certain types. The way to solve that is through education and training. If we do not have research the diseases that face us will always face us.

One of the highlights of my life was a short conversation I had with Terry Fox in 1980 when I was involved with the Cancer Society in Peterborough. I asked him why he was so insistent that the money he raised go to research. He had no idea of the amounts that would be raised in his name following his sad death. He told me that he had good care when he had cancer in his leg and that he knew people would support everyone receiving good care. "However", Terry Fox said, "money has to go into research because there will always be people with cancer like mine".

We have been fortunate in Canada. We have been able to improve the health care system looking after people but at the same time we have had the Terry Fox fund putting money into cancer research.

It is education and research that puts sustainability in our system. The system depends on having educated Canadians. We are already the most educated country in the world by many measures, and that is the way to maintain our health care system, to improve our environment, to have the best agriculture and the best economy in the world. I am going to speak about education, training and research in the budget.

In one of the budget documents—I know, Mr. Speaker, you have read it from cover to cover—there is table 5.1. This is quite a remarkable table. I know we do not have visual aids here but I wish we did. In the place where I used to work we always used them but I know it is not allowed in the House.

• (1555)

Table 5.1 is very interesting. It lays out the years 1998 to 2005. For each of those years it shows what has been spent and what will be spent in various areas of research and innovation. Down the side it lists some of the examples of spending in that six-year period.

It shows what has already been spent and what will be spent by the Canada Foundation for Innovation which funds equipment particularly in research hospitals, colleges and universities.

It lists Genome Canada, which supports genetics research. Canada is in the top three in genetics research in the world.

There is also the Canada research chairs, 2,000 fully funded research chairs. There was a time when there were only 169 fully funded research chairs in Canada and then overnight, because of this government, that number became 2,169.

The funding for what used to be called the Medical Research Council, now the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, has been doubled in recent years.

The table lists the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, which funds most of the heavy science research; the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, which funds the invaluable social science work that we do; the networks of centres of excellence, something created by this government; the Atlantic innovation fund, which supports fundamental and applied research in the Atlantic provinces; biotechnology research; government online; and connectedness, which includes that wonderful program that puts every elementary school and high school in the country on the Internet.

That list is down one side of the table. Across the top are the years and the amounts of funding. During those years that I mentioned, the funding in those areas alone has gone from \$400 million to \$11 billion. This truly is an investment in the future of our country.

I see the members of the opposition sitting, waiting to ask me questions. This truly is an area that the Prime Minister himself has said there are no votes. In the crass sense, there are no votes in this. Even the professors across the country we give the Canada research chairs to will not vote for us for this reason, although they may well vote for us. This is something that a government should do. This is a far seeing thing, just like Terry Fox saying, "We need to look after the people who have cancer now, but we have to invest in cancer research for the future so people will no longer have it". This is what the government has done, and table 5.1 is an extraordinary illustration of that.

I want to go through some of the areas, some which I have mentioned already and some which I have not. There are other investments in education, research and training which are not mentioned in that table.

First would be the granting councils and I summarized them before. I mentioned the former Medical Research Council. Funding in medical research has doubled in the last several years. Total funding for those councils is now around \$1.5 billion. It is going into basic research in colleges, universities and institutes across the country. I am glad to see that gradually the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, which does social science research which has often been neglected, is beginning to get more of its share.

One of my colleagues mentioned something which is not in that table but which was mentioned so clearly in the budget, the special announcement of the Canada graduate scholarships.

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I mentioned the 2,000 Canada research chairs, which are extraordinary things. Trent University in my riding has eight of them. The federal government is funding eight full professors with their research at a tiny university, Trent University.

To follow through with that, if we think about research professors and highly qualified researchers in laboratories and hospitals across the country, they are at the top of the pyramid. It is true we could import people to take their places but if in the end we do not have a pyramid starting with prenatal, going on to early childhood development, going on to quality elementary schools, quality child care, quality high school and then quality undergraduate and graduate schools, if we do not have all of those in all the many areas concerned, in the future we will not have the system that we have now. It will not be sustainable.

With regard to the Canada graduate scholarships, a group of MPs with whom I am associated, the government caucus on post-secondary education and research, asked that the federal government consider scholarships for undergraduate students in addition to the millennium scholarships we now provide.

● (1600)

When we think about it, if the federal government is to intervene in the system, the quickest way to get results is near the top of the undergraduate program for research and for new positions and things of that type at the bottom of the graduate schools. Of the Canada graduate scholarships, 4,000 of them fully funded, 2,000 are for masters students and 2,000 are for doctoral students. Immediately as this money flows we will be strengthening the graduate schools and strengthening Canada's capacity to produce researchers and professionals, for example, veterinarians, medical doctors and the like.

I was delighted to see that 60% of those scholarships are going to the social sciences and will be administered by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. I am pleased about that. It is my hope that in future we will fund more undergraduate scholarships.

The indirect costs of research, which is not mentioned in the table, is something that is very critical for universities and colleges conducting research across the country. The indirect costs of research sounds a bit obscure but it particularly affects small institutions.

When a small institution has a wonderful, highly qualified, world class researcher and he or she receives a \$1 million grant to conduct a project, the small institution has to find some rooms for the assistants and for the equipment for this person. The small institution receives the \$1 million. It is kind of a white elephant because it costs so much to support that person. Indirect costs of research address that problem.

I am delighted that having tried it as an experiment last year, the federal government is now committed to three years with a good review at the end of the three years to cover the indirect costs of research. The allocation system that will be used for distributing those funds has a bias not toward the larger institutions which already benefit well from many of our programs, but to the smaller institutions. I am delighted to see it in there. It is a substantial amount of money.

Northern science is mentioned in the budget but not in the table. There is a considerable increase, \$16 million, to northern science.

My colleagues in our caucus and I are very pleased about that, but there are two things. One is it is not enough. The second is we believe there should be a more coordinated and focused approach to northern science, the way we are trying to be more accountable for example in health care and in our allocations to the provinces.

We believe the federal government has a special responsibility in the north, not interfering with the jurisdiction of the territories at all, but that it has a special responsibility for research and higher education there, and we should be more focused in our efforts. We hope the government this time in its increased funding to northern research gave additional moneys to the polar continental shelf research project, which is the aircraft support system for research in the Arctic islands. In particular, we are glad of that.

Next time the government should give consideration to the national scientific training program, NSTP. It is the program that supports undergraduates and graduates learning about how to do northern research. That goes back to my point about sustainability of the system.

I mentioned the Canada Foundation for Innovation. It is extraordinary. That foundation, set up by the government and as shown in the table, has given away over \$3 billion to hospitals, colleges and universities. I am particularly pleased that from its inception it decided to deal with colleges and Cegeps. In the past the federal government has not done that.

The remarkable thing about Genome Canada is that it operates regionally. My regret is that we have supported Genome Canada and its various projects and it is my hope that in the future we will support animal genetics as much as we have supported research into plants and human genetics.

I mentioned SchoolNet. I mentioned aboriginal students. I am very pleased about that support.

Even though I look to our having a sustainable system of education, training and research, I am glad that the government is investing money in the more rapid and effective assessment and recognition of foreign credentials. Many immigrants come to our shores. They do not expect to walk into a highly qualified workplace and function straight away. However they find too many barriers and the budget is dealing with that.

● (1605)

Last, with regard to access to education, I am delighted with the improvements to the Canada student loans program.

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join in the debate. Like many members of the House, it was just moments after the minister brought down his budget, not too long ago, that many of us were called to the phone to give our opinion. I reacted very positively and I will explain why.

Budget

On page 4 of the budget the minister talked about the accountability that Canadians deserve. I will centre my remarks today on just that. On page 15 of the budget the finance minister said he had been across Canada and everywhere people told him they wanted the government to be more accountable and more transparent.

Finally, I want to quote from his budget speech when he said, "which is why we are making accountability a cornerstone of this budget". I stand here with all honesty and I would to God, that could be true. This country, not just government, but in our larger business and so on, needs a healthy dose of an anti-toxin to get rid of some of the unaccountability that we have faced.

When I took the budget home and read it and I asked people what they thought of it, their response was, "Who cares?" They said all they read about was some corruption that was going on. That is a disgrace to the country. Just yesterday was typical. Every day, every week that goes by we pick up the paper and read about more fraud. There was an article in the Toronto *Sun* about the kickback on federal credit cards which were abused for over 20 years.

What do the people out in my part of the country call this? They say that if it is going to continue, who cares about the budget? I would hope that every department, every bureaucrat and every person who has anything to do with cutting cheques, and those who are receiving them, can live up to being accountable. Canadians are totally fed up.

An elderly gentleman, a real scholar and who I think is getting close to his nineties, sent me a letter. He said that never before has there been a decade in the history of Canada that the government has been involved with more corruption and more fraud than this past decade.

He is probably right. Every year that I have been here we have had major fraud cases before us. I think the Minister of Finance truly meant what he said, that Canadians deserve accountability. Canadians are demanding accountability and they are losing faith with governments, provincial and federal. We can tell by looking at the percentage of people who turn out to vote. It is going down and down and down because of that disease called unaccountability.

My constituency has a lot of governments. I have been involved in governments of one type or another for 24 years. I have helped to prepare budgets and have put my signature to them. In all of those years, I remember only once that somehow we were out \$24, not \$24 million. Why is it that the present government cannot follow the paths of local governments with accountability?

• (1610)

I will be sharing my time, Mr. Speaker, with the hon. member who just came in.

Let me tell members about the people in the northeast corner of Saskatchewan. They came into this country just before World War I. They did not come from countries that had democratic governments. They did not come from countries that had organizations at the local levels. They came into a rural municipality with school districts and they accepted that type of accountability. They made the finest citizens, and many of them live in my constituency.

We see in the budget the idea that we will turn over more money to everybody but I do not see within the budget any mention as to how the government will control the money that is being handed out. Oftentimes we have \$6 billion which is unaccounted. At the present time the Minister of National Revenue simply says that the money that has been taken in GST fraud will be written off as uncollectable taxes; \$30 million, \$40 million, who knows if it will go to \$1 billion? That is not acceptable and Canadians are not accepting that.

I do not know what the people here say, but where I come from people are totally disillusioned when they pick up the paper every day and see another fraud, another scam. Some people say "So what? That is the basis of democracy". Do members know how democracy started? They took old King John down to Runnymede and said "If you don't start being responsible to your people, we're going to knock your head off right here". That is how it began. Accountability and democracy go together but somehow we have let accountability go and in doing so we have let democracy go.

In the area that I represent, I have 45 rural municipal governments, 7 school divisions, 2 cities and 57 towns and villages. I would bet money today that come the end of the current fiscal year they will not be out one cent. We need to ask ourselves a question. Why does the government get involved with the GST fraud, the HRDC fraud, frauds and frauds? We need to take a good look at where those billions of dollars go. There is no machinery there to account for how this money will be spent. It is most common in my province.

I was pleased to hear what the minister had to say. I even believe what the finance minister said about accountability. I believe he knows what he is talking about and I believe he really wants that to be part of this budget. I think everyone in the House, particularly on the government's side, better say that we will come in with a fraud-free year and that we will not let this fraudulent activity, which has gone on for a decade, continue into another decade.

No one would be happier than the citizens out there. Instead of 50% and 60% of people voting, we could have 70%. That would be a great delight to everyone.

• (1615)

Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his comments. I too agree with him on the issue of accountability.

The minister talked about a new culture of accountability and more transparency in what we do. Programs that are currently funded will not necessarily will be funded again next year. They have to account for that. They have to account to Parliament. There should be more accountability of foundations for the taxpayer dollar.

Budget

I appreciate my colleague's comments. That is very much what the minister has framed in the budget, the context of which is very important. I would agree with the member that Canadians are concerned with any order of government, whether it is federal, provincial or municipal. They want to see that. The new culture of accountability is ensuring that the bureaucracy, members of Parliament and the public understand that these dollars do not just grow on trees. It is very important that we do that. It is outlined, as my hon. colleague will know, in the speech and it details how that would come about.

To go one step further, I want to ask the hon. member a question with regard to the issue of accountability. Are there specific measures which the minister did not address that could in fact be helpful in terms of ensuring this type of transparency so that every dollar is better accounted for to the Canadian public?

Mr. Roy Bailey: Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that one reason why the provincial governments put money into local governments is because there is a program, there is a legal system intact for them. That is part of our history. We have billions of dollars going out to our first nations and other people where we have not been gracious enough to provide them with the same machinery so they can have complete and total accountability. Until we do that, not just for them but for business or anyone else and until we have that accountability then we will not have a culture of accountability.

Let us move, as somebody described it, from a culture of corruption to a culture of accountability. I think it is possible and I think my hon. colleague believes that it is possible as well. However the recipients must have the machinery, the equality and the guidelines by which they can be accountable.

• (1620)

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton Centre-East, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to ask a question with regard to the accountability. We all know the problematic files, from firearms to GST to HRDC to Groupaction, and the list goes on and on. We also have the homeless file, where \$753 million has been put in over the last three years supposedly to help the homeless. The three years is up this year. The homeless count is up 60%. The shelters are full. There are people sleeping on the street and sleeping in the LRT stations for emergency shelter. The question really becomes, "Where did the money go?" That comes around to the accountability of it.

I would like my colleague's opinion on the importance of accountability and proving the accountability of past money before we put new money into it.

Mr. Roy Bailey: Mr. Speaker, it goes back to the point that I made. If a department is in charge of so much funding and this funding is for housing, then it has to be accountable not only to the House but to the taxpayers across Canada as to how this money is spent. This is exactly why the Auditor General has twice repeated that the government has broken every rule in the book. We must get back to accountability. It is a question of the desire of the government to move from where we are now into a clear slate of accountability in every department.

An hon. member: And do it.

Mr. Roy Bailey: And do it, yes.

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in the vein of accountability, roughly a year ago we saw the Prime Minister order two brand new Challenger jets, taking the money basically out of DND and deciding that on his farewell tour he needed some better flying accommodations. In this last two weeks, when we were at home, the announcement came out that those jets were now in the air and the Prime Minister and the ministers, who travel on them, had lobster tastes. The meals and so on to be served on them will run into hundreds of thousands of dollars a year.

Did the member hear from his constituents on that type of accountability?

Mr. Roy Bailey: Mr. Speaker, I do not think I heard about the lobsters but I have heard lots of opinions about money into the new aircraft.

As the official opposition critic for veterans affairs, again we come across an element of accountability in representing the vets across Canada. We have been lax in that area.

A prime example of accountability is that 50 years ago we had promised our vets, who had just come back, that they would have a new war museum. As the last of all the allies, we still do not have it and most vets will never live to see it. That kind of accountability hurts me.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise and speak in this debate on the budget.

There has been a substantial increase in foreign aid contributions contained in this budget. As the senior critic for the Canadian Alliance on international co-operation and foreign aid, I feel it is necessary to lay out our point of view on those increases and where we will go with them.

Before I start, I would like to make it very clear where the Canadian Alliance stands in regard to foreign aid and international co-operation. My good friends in the NDP and many members on the Liberal side have their heads in the sand. They stand up and scream wolf whenever the Alliance talks about international development. I want them to listen very carefully to what the Canadian Alliance policy is on international co-operation.

We believe international development assistance is an important part of Canada's contribution to the world community to alleviate poverty and disease, to promote education and good governance and to assist in economic development. That is the Canadian Alliance policy. However we believe in effective delivery of foreign aid.

As I have said many times in this chamber, I grew up in Tanzania in Africa. That country was a recipient of foreign aid. At that time there were good intentions from all sides, including Canada. Huge amounts of money have been poured into that country and into other countries in Africa as well as other countries in Asia and Latin America. After 25 years of such outpouring of aid, we now stand again on the threshold looking for ways to alleviate poverty. Why?

Budget

The new minister responsible for CIDA has a new document out. She will be in front of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade on Thursday to talk about this new document. Interestingly, this document talks about delivering effective aid.

The government has been in power since 1993 and 10 years later it produces a document dealing with the delivery of effective aid. What has it been doing for the last nine years? It has been consulting. CIDA is a huge bureaucracy with expertise in that so-called department, yet after 10 years of this government's ruling, it now comes up with this document to deliver effective aid.

I have been in the position of senior critic for international co-operation for only one and a half years. In that little time I have produced a document which talks about restructuring CIDA and utilizing effective dollars. What is wrong? Why did it take so long for the government, with all of its bureaucrats, to come up with that document? When I looked at the document, it contained the same recommendations which I talked about, yet it took the government 10 years to get to this.

This department has close to \$2 billion of taxpayer money to spend. Where has the department been spending this money?

This came as a surprise to me as the critic for international co-operation. I travel many times. There seems to be a culture of secrecy in CIDA. When I met the president of CIDA, Len Good, he did not even know that I was the critic for international co-operation. He does not care about a counterpart.

• (1625)

I visited India. I visited Morocco as recently as January. I talked to CIDA officials over there. The moment they find out that I am an opposition critic for CIDA, it is boom, gone, and they do not want to talk to me. They do not want to tell me what they are doing. They are afraid of something. Afraid of what? These are taxpayers' dollars. Why is there a culture of secrecy in this department called CIDA? They should be out there proudly flying the Canadian flag and saying Canadians are compassionate and would like to help. It is no wonder that where I go, and I find it interesting, there is criticism based on CIDA, whether it is the NGOs, which also have excellent expertise, can very well deliver, can become good partners and on many occasions are good partners. There is expertise there. There is expertise in Canada to give effective aid dollars.

In my point of view, this cultural secrecy in CIDA needs to stop in order for them to do effective delivery. We can do very well with small dollars, but effectively, rather than pouring in dollar after dollar and throwing in money without knowing where we are going and what our idea is. Just flying the Canadian flag out there is not going to solve the problem.

Now the Prime Minister has committed Canada until the year 2010, when he is no longer going to be in power, not after next year, to an annual increase of 8%, which will take the foreign aid budget to \$4.6 billion by the year 2010. Imagine, Mr. Speaker, that you want to increase this to \$4.6 billion and you are not even in power. How does that work? Of course it is a racket. Sure, the Prime Minister stood up in the G-8 conference and said that we need to help Africa. Of course we need to help Africa when we see the devastation there

because of AIDS and by a collapse of infrastructure and the education system. Yes, we do, but we really need to take a step back and see what we are doing.

We continue giving aid to countries that I would say are on the threshold of joining the developed nations of the world. I mean India and China. They are on the threshold of becoming developed nations of the world. Proudly the Indian prime minister says that by the year 2020 India will become a developed nation. I hope it happens. I wish it the best of luck. It should go ahead and do that, but let us see where we, as Canada, are going to use our effective dollars, our taxpayers' dollars. We need to use them effectively, so can we not re-prioritize?

I see that CIDA is now talking about it giving money to eight or nine African countries and one Asian country, narrowing down its focus. Yes, I have no dispute with that kind of thinking, because now we are focusing and strategizing where we are going to put our money. That should have been the focus.

Nevertheless, over the whole situation, with that money CIDA is still looking after geographical interests. It is not narrowing down its focus. It has identified these countries but, nevertheless, the minister has stated time after time that she is going to give money to China and India because there are poor people living there and the commitment of the Prime Minister is to alleviate poverty.

Excuse me, but somebody else also has the responsibility. The governments of those nations have the responsibility. Since when did we start taking responsibility away from them? The Government of China has the responsibility. Instead of sending a person into space, it has the responsibility to look after its poor. Since when did that happen?

I see, Mr. Speaker, that my time is up. Of course this is a subject that is very passionate. Canadians love it. Canadians want to help out. We would like to see the effective use of Canadian taxpayers' dollars.

* * *

• (1630)

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Paul DeVillers (Secretary of State (Amateur Sport) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That when the House begins proceedings under the provisions of Standing Order 52 later this day, no quorum calls nor dilatory motions be entertained by the Speaker after 8:00 p.m.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is there unanimous consent to table the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think if you ask the hon. minister to ask that question again of the House, he will receive unanimous consent from all parties.

The Budget

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I will ask the Secretary of State for Amateur Sport to read the motion once more.

Hon. Paul DeVillers: Mr. Speaker, I believe that you will now find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That when the House begins proceedings under the provisions of Standing Order 52 later this day, no quorum calls nor dilatory motions shall be entertained by the Speaker after 8 p.m.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is there unanimous consent to table the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Does the House agree with the terms of the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1635)

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

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

Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise today to talk further about the budget. To reiterate, I am quite happy that there are a number of references to the north in the budget and now perhaps I will go on to talk about the future to some extent, now that we have had feedback, and where we can go in the future to increase and improve the economy, especially as related to my constituency.

As I mentioned, I was delighted that in the budget there is increased money for Coast Guard and national defence. It is very important from my perspective that some of these funds go toward protecting northern sovereignty. It has been proven that the Northwest Passage is melting at an accelerating rate. Foreign ships are now intruding in that area, sometimes without being questioned at all. This can have ramifications on our environment, on defence, on immigration and on tenure of sovereignty in the area. I encourage those responsible to ensure that some of those Coast Guard and national defence expenditures are made in the north, especially as related to northern sovereignty and the Northwest Passage.

I was of course very happy to see that the national child benefit is up 100% since 1996. Some say it is the most important social program in the last decade. It goes a long way to helping to fight child poverty. We need to continually work in that area.

For aboriginal people, there are a number of programs and there is funding in the budget. In my riding, which is approximately 24% aboriginal, there will be a larger uptake than there will in most of Canada. It is very important for my riding that there are new post-secondary scholarships, money for water and waste water treatment and money for aboriginal skills and training. Specifically there is once again reference to the north, because the budget mentions

training for large projects such as northern gas pipelines. I think there was \$25 million in that area.

There is also money for an urban aboriginal strategy, which is very important for Canada because a very significant portion of aboriginal people do not live on reserves and sometimes fall between the cracks related to programs and funding, et cetera, in urban areas. I am delighted that an urban aboriginal strategy is referred to in the budget. Of course, increasing the money for Aboriginal Business Canada is very positive. The aboriginal people have a very dynamic business community with a number of excellent businesses and we have been able to help them over the years. Increasing that support is very positive.

I was also very happy to see the national immunization strategy in the budget. Before the budget, a number of constituents spoke to me specifically about smallpox, but I am glad this \$45 million has been allocated to deal with immunization.

Of course I think we were all happy to see the child disability benefit so that families can better care for children with disabilities.

I was also happy to see the \$10 million related to historic site preservation. We have a great history in Yukon since the Klondike gold rush in 1898 and with centuries of first nations history before that. Preserving our historic places is a very important part of our tourism industry, which is the biggest private sector employer in our economy at the moment.

Also, the Business Development Bank of Canada is an important player in financing in Yukon so I was delighted to see \$190 million added to the venture capital for business development.

I was also glad to see money for climate change. When we had prebudget discussions with the finance minister, I brought in a youth who said that she was very supportive of measures to deal with climate change. I am delighted that there is \$1.7 billion and, in particular, \$50 million to increase climate and atmospheric research activities, including research related to northern Canada.

• (1640)

I was delighted to see the reference to the north because climate change has a far more dramatic effect on the north. In some areas of the Arctic some of our first nations administration buildings are sinking because permafrost is melting. We depend on ice bridges for our economy and those are not forming early enough for the trucks to get across. It affects the migration patterns of the wildlife on which aboriginal people depend for their sustenance. It has all sorts of effects in the north.

The Budget

We were delighted to see that study and a lot of the other money going toward renewable energy, wind energy and energy efficient alternative fuels. We have some wind energy in the north. Energy costs more in the north so we are happy to see anything that will lower the costs and lower our CO₂ emissions.

We were also very happy, and it was one of the first things mentioned by the finance minister, that it will be a balanced budget. We will continue not to spend more than we take in and continue to reduce the national debt. As a very rich country, both in resources and people, we do not want to needlessly spend on interest payments when we could be spending on health care and education.

One of the very important things in my riding, which people asked me about before the budget and for which I lobbied hard, is funding support for the communities partnership initiative. The committee work in Yukon was exemplary. People wanted it to continue and they were delighted that it will be extended for three years.

Tourism is very important. It is probably the largest private industry in our economy at the moment as far as employment goes, although a lot of it is seasonal. People lobbied for it and were delighted with the decrease in the air security tax from \$12 to \$7 per flight. That 40% decrease helps this major industry. In the future, any money we can give to the Canadian Tourism Commission to help market Canada around the world will be well received. It is a very competitive environment and we want to continue being competitive with other countries to bring in tourists and maintain tourism in Canada.

Along the line of tourism, of course, our national parks are very important. We were delighted with the announcement earlier of 10 new national parks and 5 new marine areas, and the \$74 million that will go toward creating those and to protecting the biological integrity of existing parks. I think that may be over five years but it could even be accelerated to two years because obviously we will need more money in the future to deal with those two issues. I know the Yukon branch of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society would definitely like to see that.

Some tourists come to see how placer mining works in Yukon. Placer mining is our second largest industry and it contributes importantly to the infrastructure. A vast majority of the tourists only come for certain months of the year and yet tourist operators have to make their payments over the entire year. In the shorter seasons the placer industry provides income for the tourist infrastructure and allows the tourism industry to exist.

We have a lot of support for the placer industry in Yukon. We had Black Wednesday last week where 100% of the businesses in Dawson City in particular showed their support for the placer industry in one way or another. I would like to congratulate Jorn Meier, the president of the Dawson City Chamber of Commerce; Lindsay Jordan, the executive director of the Dawson City Chamber of Commerce; Don Cox of the Yukon Chamber of Commerce; and Sandy Babcock, the executive director of Yukon Chamber of Commerce, for all their work in putting these events together that showed support for the placer industry. This included a luncheon banquet in Whitehorse that had to turn people away because there were so many people lined up to support this great industry in our history.

The placer industry provides taxes to the four orders of government: the federal, the territorial, the first nations and the municipal, which is very important for the City of Dawson of course, but also for the City of Mayo and other communities. Sometimes people leave out the first nations government which has selected lands for the revenues that it will generate from the placer industry, so it is important to the first nations as well.

● (1645)

With the unique funding formula that we have in Yukon, if we were to lose revenue from an industry, whether it is the placer industry or others, then the formula financing would kick in to replenish that. Therefore there are costs in other ways to the federal government if we cannot make sure that we support our industries.

As most people are aware, Yukon has one of the highest rates of unemployment, behind a couple of the maritime provinces at this point. We need all the support we can get to help the economy.

I have also met with the child care people since budget day. They are happy that there is more money for child care; \$935 million over five years. They are hoping the provinces, the territories and the federal government will hurry up and get the agreement in place so they can start delivering. The present schedule for the first year will not make very much difference or create a lot of spaces. We would like to get that implemented as quickly as possible and with sufficient resources.

The \$35 million extra for aboriginal early learning and child care is very important for my riding as well. The head start program, as an example, has been a resounding success. For years I have been trying to and have successfully achieved getting more money for that program. We have different groups in first nations communities around Yukon that would like one of these head start programs because of its success. In fact, just a few days ago I met with the Gwitchin people in the farthest community from Ottawa, Old Crow in the far north. They would like to start up a head start program.

I also want to acknowledge and support the comments of my colleague from Peterborough when he talked about all the educational items and the post-secondary education money in this budget. I was delighted to see the 2,000 extra scholarships for MAs and the additional 2,000 for PhDs.

The Budget

The reason I raise this is that unfortunately we have just had the passing of the dean of Yukon College, Aron Senkpiel. His whole career was aimed at providing research in and for the north, for Yukon College as a northern academic institution. I am sure he would have been happy to see that the granting councils will also be asked to enhance their support for northern research as part of the increased funding they will receive in this budget. I remember meeting with him not long ago. He spent a lot of his life developing the University of the Arctic, which is a university of the circumpolar world done over the computer. That is a great institution. I hope that young people listening today will consider attending either Yukon College or the circumpolar University of the Arctic through the computer. It is a great legacy to Mr. Senkpiel.

As I said earlier, because of the state of our economy we always need to promote economic development in the north. This is partly done through infrastructure and it would be great if more funds could be attached to economic development in the three northern territories and in the northern parts of the provinces, but specifically in my riding of Yukon because of its low employment levels at the moment.

Something that is not related to the budget but which always causes us a hiccup, and which many of my constituents have mentioned to me, is to keep pursuing our work on the internal trade agreement. In British Columbia quite often there are regulations and licensing, especially for things related to trucking, which make it very difficult for our people to work in British Columbia.

Another item for which I lobbied and which I was delighted to see, and one that is very important for the north from my perspective, is the \$175 million toward federal abandoned contaminated sites. Once again, it mentions specifically the north. It talks about the abandoned hard rock mines in the north. As members know, the hard rock mines leave tailings full of minerals like zinc which can be poisonous to fish. Now that these companies have gone bankrupt and left, a lot of work needs to be done to clean this up. It is of specific danger to our fishery. I was delighted to see work start in that area in a large way.

I was also happy to see the excise exemption for biodiesel fuel to clean up our atmosphere. I am sure most people were happy that we were able to preserve the largest tax cut in history, the \$100 billion, and that will continue on as it was scheduled in previous budgets.

• (1650)

The resource industry in Canada, but specifically in the north, is very important. We were delighted to see the reduction in the resource tax from 28% to 21% and a deduction for mining royalties. Mining of course was the biggest economic generator in Yukon over the last century toward the gross territorial product. We were also delighted to see the new tax credit for qualifying mineral exploration. All these things will help the type of businesses that have existed and could exist in my riding.

The infrastructure, as I mentioned earlier, is always important in the north. We have difficult climatic conditions, with permafrost. We have long distances to build roads and sewers in this permafrost and we must compensate when it melts or freezes and try to stop it from melting and freezing. There are very few taxpayers in that distance so assistance for infrastructure is exceptionally important to us. We

were delighted to see the increases in infrastructure: \$2 billion extra for the strategic infrastructure program over the next 10 years and another \$1 billion for municipal infrastructure. The Association of Yukon Communities and all the municipalities in the Yukon have been very effective in using the infrastructure program in the past and have great needs that they need to continue on with.

I was delighted to see that \$32 million will go toward the environmental and regulatory assessment of a natural gas pipeline. This project, the Alaska highway natural gas pipeline, will be the largest project of its type in the history of the world. It will have a huge economic benefit for everyone and will create jobs in not only my riding but in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and most of Canada.

There was also an initiative to bring skilled immigrants to rural areas. In the past, as we know, immigrants have gone primarily to Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver in large numbers. The small areas have a harder time accessing this talent.

Health care in my riding, as it is in others, is a very important consideration. We were delighted to see an increase in spending. We have some special challenges related to recruitment in the far north, related to human resources strategy, related to having access to specialists and hospitals in other provinces because we do not have major surgery hospitals in the north. As well, my constituents want waiting lists to be reduced. All that was done in the health care accord in those areas was good. I hope we will continue to look at the core costs of health care.

I have talked to my medical association since and the challenges are still in the core costs as we go on. Although there was a recruitment and human resources strategy for the future, the crux of the situation right now is that there is quite a shortage. Anything that can be done to alleviate that shortage in the immediate term would be very helpful. It goes without saying that the first nations health care increase of \$1.3 billion is very important for my riding.

I was delighted to see the increase in the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' green fund. I lobbied for that in every budget. It has been increased because we have done such an excellent job in protecting the environment and reducing greenhouse gases with that program.

I mentioned the support for business. I mentioned a number of the tax provisions already. I mentioned the reduction in the national debt and the fact it is a balanced budget. Most of the businesses in our area are small businesses so they were quite happy to see the increase in the exemptions for small businesses so that when their tax rate is 12%, it goes from \$200,000 to \$300,000 a year, and that the capital tax was eliminated over five years, which many of them asked for.

The Budget

I was very happy to see that many of the provisions, which touched many of the aspects of what people in my riding were concerned about and what people came to me about before the budget, were addressed.

Today I have spoken about some areas where things can be improved even more in the future for the people in my riding.

Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member has had a long and distinguished career dealing with municipal issues in Yukon, particularly with the Yukon Association of Communities. I would like to clarify something by asking the member to comment.

There was some comment from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities after the budget about the infrastructure funding. I have a letter dated March 5 from the president of the FCM indicating that the budget in fact has many positive elements to it. He talked about the green enabling fund. He talked about a number of the issues, infrastructure as well, and the fact that the minister had mentioned a down payment on infrastructure.

In terms of the issue of improving the quality of life for Yukoners, particularly in communities, how does the member see the budget touching them specifically in terms of dealing with infrastructure and air quality? Perhaps he could elaborate on the green enabling fund. That seems to be of particular interest to a number of communities in Yukon.

• (1655)

Mr. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, when the Liberal government came in, it started the infrastructure programs. There was no such program in the recent past. In Yukon it was very successful. There was a one-third sharing arrangement so that the municipalities, the territorial government and the federal government each put in a third.

As far as I remember, every single municipality in Yukon had access to those programs, whether they were for hockey arenas, sewer and water, or fixing roads damaged by permafrost. To indicate how bad it was, one of our communities replaced sewer pipes that were made out of wood staves. That illustrates how old the infrastructure was. The problem in the previous rounds of infrastructure funding was that it was done on a per capita basis. That of course does not go very far in the north.

As I said earlier, we have permafrost. We have very few taxpayers and they are very far apart. A couple of years ago the finance committee, and thanks to members of all parties who were on the finance committee, realized that type of formula did not work for infrastructure in the north. An increase in infrastructure funding has been fought for since I was at the Association of Yukon Communities and subsequently by president Glen Everitt, executive director Jim Slater and all the municipalities and the FCM. In the most recent round for strategic infrastructure, they were successful in receiving a base amount for the northern communities for infrastructure.

I am hoping the strategic infrastructure fund will not specifically be used for our Canada winter games contribution. There are all sorts of lists. Each territory has brought forward lists of millions of dollars for areas where infrastructure funding would be very helpful. It will improve the quality of life so that we can recruit and maintain

workers, including health care professionals, for the projects that we need in Yukon.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague from Yukon on his remarks regarding national parks and the child tax benefit.

I am pleased to see that he is one of the few Liberals who actually recognizes that although there is money going to national parks, it is simply not enough and he is hoping there will be more in the future. I congratulate him for that statement.

As he also knows, the major flaw of the child tax benefit program, which I think is a very good program, is that it still allows the provinces to claw back dollar for dollar. In Nova Scotia for example, the poorest people still do not have access to it because the province claws it back.

One of the good things, and I give the hon. Minister of Human Resources Development credit, is the compassionate care leave for palliative and serious rehabilitative care for only six weeks.

The member knows that on Thursday we will be debating Bill C-206, which is votable, which expands that particular initiative to the same benefits as that of maternity leave. This means if a couple has a child through natural birth or adoption, one partner can take a year of maternity leave to care for the child. On the other hand, if a couple has a child who is diagnosed with cancer and only has six to eight months to live, six weeks of this program simply will not be enough.

The bill that we introduced over five years ago would allow a parent to stay home with an ill child, for example, for the same duration as provided for maternity leave. I am wondering if he would support that type of initiative. We will vote in the House of Commons to move that bill to committee. I am wondering if the hon. member for Yukon, who is a fine member of the House of Commons, would actually support that type of initiative.

• (1700)

Mr. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, I will comment on two items that the member raised. First, on palliative care, I think we were all pretty excited when the finance bill was introduced. I will look at the items the member has talked about and the rationale, arguments and the details in that debate. Anything that can improve that situation would be good.

In relation to the clawback, the member has raised a very good point. In the past we have had some good and bad experiences with the provinces. On some occasions, as the member has said, the provinces have taken the money and we did not attain the objective that we all agreed to fulfill, whereas there are other provinces that responsibly fulfilled the objective that we wanted. The money was for early childhood education and early childhood development although they may have clawed back to provide for other programs that do the same thing.

I am very sensitive to that issue as well. I would be very angry, as perhaps the member was, when those funds are designated for early childhood development and are used for something else. We will certainly fight to do anything we can to make sure that does not occur in this situation.

The Budget

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be dividing my time with my colleague, the member for Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore.

I am going to focus this afternoon on two important aspects of the budget, post-secondary education and agriculture. Before I do that I want to say a word or two in general about the budget itself and respond to the criticism from the Canadian Alliance, the C.D. Howe Institute, the Fraser Institute and other right-wing organizations that accused the government that spending was raised too quickly in its budget last month.

Au contraire, we would argue that with the enormous surpluses the government has been running, together with its perpetual ability to grossly underestimate said surpluses year upon year, the budget could have and should have done a whole lot more to make urgently needed social investments. When measured against the share of the overall economy, program funding continues to fall and remains well below where it was a decade ago. Federal spending for example has dropped from 16.5% of gross domestic product to just 11.4% over the past 10 years. This is a reduction that is equal to approximately \$40 billion in annual spending.

I will now refer to post-secondary education.

[*Translation*]

This budget tells us that next year, the CHST will be divided into two separate transfers: a health transfer comprised of 62% of the resources, and another one designed to support post-secondary education and social service with 38% of the resources.

While health spending will increase substantially, funding for post-secondary education will decrease sharply, from \$2.4 billion to \$1.8 billion.

One must therefore wonder if the new spending for health announced with great fanfare is really new spending, or whether part of this spending comes from a reallocation of funds previously allocated to post-secondary education and social services.

• (1705)

[*English*]

The cutbacks to post-secondary education are unconscionable given what has happened to the levels of student debt and tuition fees in recent years. Average student debt when the government came to power was \$13,000. Today it is over \$21,000. Tuition fees have exceeded inflation by sixfold between 1991 and 2001.

The government responds by saying that tuition fees are a provincial responsibility, but what it cannot seem to get through its thick head is that it is federal cutbacks that have jacked up tuition fees. It is a cause and effect relationship.

[*Translation*]

Students and the rest of us realize every day that higher education has never been as important as it is today; new jobs are knowledge based. Yet, it is more difficult than ever to be a full-time student in Canada.

Over the past 20 years, the United States has increased funding for post-secondary education by approximately 20%, while Canada cut back support to colleges and universities by 30%.

[*English*]

For Canadians, this means higher tuition fees and debt loads and fewer students who can afford to attend university on a full time basis simply because they are forced to work part time to help defray their costs. It means crumbling buildings on university campuses because basic maintenance has been deferred due to the cash crunch. It means more reliance on sessional lecturers. It also means larger classrooms. Enrolments are forecast to rise by 30% over the next decade, and the government has to come to grips with that.

Are higher tuition fees keeping some students from attending university? One president told me last week that while the evidence is inconclusive, the data does reveal that children of families in the bottom quartile are not attending post-secondary institutions at the same high rate as those in the top quartile.

A number of solutions are obvious. Reduce costs by entering into genuine partnerships with provinces. Replace the millennium scholarship program with needs based grants. Relieve student debt by having the federal government assume interest costs on Canada student loans during the life of that loan. Eliminate all taxes on scholarships, grants and bursaries. If it is good enough for lottery winners in Canada to escape the tax man, surely it ought to be good enough for our students.

One meaningful solution would be to reduce tuition fees and provide a national system of needs based grants. Anything less is simply tinkering around the margins.

Let me turn briefly to the other subject, agriculture.

[*Translation*]

Although the government announced increased funding for crop insurance programs, food inspection, veterinary colleges and the Canadian Grain Commission, no new funds will go directly to farmers.

How can this be after the important announcement made by the Prime Minister last June? It is difficult for Canadian farmers to reach a consensus, but the current government has done the impossible.

[*English*]

Farm leaders are unanimous in their opposition to the business risk management proposal of the agricultural policy framework saying they are much worse off under these new proposals than what exists at the present time. It is elementary my dear Watson, the deputy minister, but with 22 major Canadian farm groups saying they have been ignored, the only farmers the department has not alienated are those it has not yet met. This is because the new NISA is nothing more than the old Canadian farm income plan and the government is demanding that more of the money for the new NISA come directly from a farmer's or a producer's NISA account.

The Budget

[Translation]

In other words, even if some producers are in a better position following the creation of this new risk management program, it will be because they took risks with their own money. If they do not have the necessary funds, too bad for them.

In fact, the current government should increase its financial support for agriculture by \$1.1 billion per year, over the next five years. Currently, there is no indexation, and this is totally ridiculous. This money would help farmers forced to compete with the treasuries of Washington and Brussels. This means \$1.3 billion annually.

[English]

The budget makes passing reference to the problems of international subsidies in agriculture but once again fails to offer any solutions. It could be summed up as "we feel the farmers' pain". Maybe the government should feel the pulse of farmers instead. If it does not do something and do it significantly and quickly, agriculture and the family farm as we know it will simply not make it.

[Translation]

Based on the Harbinson draft report on a new agricultural agreement at the WTO, it seems likely that in nine or ten years, a new agreement in this area will greatly reduce agricultural subsidies. But the current government carelessly assumes that our farmers will be able to survive another decade of unfair competition by foreign governments.

The government must recognize the damage done to farm families by American and European subsidies and protect the income of farmers.

• (1710)

[English]

Ottawa must consult openly with farm organizations, provincial and territorial governments to provide new safety net programs acceptable to the industry. It is time finally to show some grit and determination by challenging the Americans and the Europeans at the WTO.

The U.S. farm bill last year announced an additional \$19 billion in farm subsidies which took the Americans to the outer limit, we were told, of what they could spend under the WTO rules. How is it then that they have just announced another package in excess of \$3 billion to assist American grain and oilseed producers. The nervous Nellys across the way say we cannot take the U.S. to WTO court because the trade imbalance is so lopsided in Canada's favour.

We witnessed the contretemps that occurred on the split-run magazine issue when the Americans threatened to retaliate on steel. If that is the case then we should not have signed the agreement in the first place. Either we have rules that everybody signs on to and agrees to play by or we walk away from the agreement.

As the Prince Edward Island farmer told the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food a year ago, the way it is now under the WTO and the free trade agreement, Americans have rights while Canadians have obligations.

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague. The first part of his speech had to do with tuition fees and the role of the federal government in that field. The second part had to do with agriculture.

On the tuition fees, it is a fact by the way that it is provincial jurisdiction but it is also a fact that the government has done its very best to deal with the matter of access to universities and colleges across the country. The extraordinary thing is that in the province of Quebec, the Cegep, going to college is actually free. Here is one jurisdiction, with whatever changes the federal government has made, has been able to cope with it by making it free. I think is a very attractive thing to go to college, and post-secondary education is a necessity nowadays.

I think he has forgotten the improvements to the Canada student loan which are in the budget. He has forgotten the million students who will receive millennium scholarships. He has forgotten the funding of indirect cost of research which helps professors employ students and provide them with a meaningful living. He has forgotten the 4,000 graduate scholarships in the budget. He has forgotten 2,000 Canada research chairs through which the federal government directly funds the universities, going around the province. He has forgotten the large fund for aboriginal student education. He has forgotten the RESPs tax exemptions with grants for families planning to send their kids to school.

However, the remarkable thing is that he goes on to agriculture and then seems to forget his interest in post-secondary education. He forgets that in the budget, for example, the veterinary colleges receive direct support which is important for training young people in a key profession nowadays with global trade.

He mentioned one part of the agricultural policy framework. However he forgot that a substantial part of the APF is going to research which is a very traditional federal government function, and research is well accepted by farmers. Farmers know they need a strong research base to be competitive. I would like the member's comments on those things. Is he interested, by the way, in post-secondary education in agriculture?

Mr. Dick Proctor: Mr. Speaker, the member for Peterborough was listening but he was not listening very carefully because I did deal with agriculture in the first part. I did mention that there was money for things like the Canadian Grain Commission, like veterinarian colleges and two or three other things to which the member referred. What I tried to say, and would stand by 100%, was that there was no money put into the pockets of farmers to help them out of an enormously difficult time, which has gone on for too long and for several years.

The Budget

The point is there is less money coming up in the new budget with the new NISA program than was available under the old CFIP program. The government has managed to have 22 farm organizations saying that it should delay the agriculture policy framework, the business risk management plan, because it will not provide even the same very modest levels of support that the old AIDA program provided and more recently, the CFIP plan provided.

I did not ignore what the member was alleging but I was trying to put it in perspective that there is no money for Canadian farmers in the budget introduced last month.

With respect to post-secondary education, all the student organizations across the country are very concerned about the hikes in tuition fees, and it comes as a direct result. As I was trying to say in referencing this, there needs to be a partnership between the provinces and the federal government, not between the federal government and business or the provinces and business. Let us do it government to government. Let us get back to established program financing the way it was many years ago where it was mostly a fifty: fifty arrangement. We have gone a long way back from that on health care. We have gone in the same direction on post-secondary.

It is time that the federal government stepped up to the plate. Yes, money for research is good but it is the young people who are entering university, the undergraduates, the people in the liberal arts education who are not getting the same kind of access to education as they did in the past.

• (1715)

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague from Palliser for his comments on education and agriculture but I would like to zero in on a couple of issues which the budget ignored.

A budget should reflect today's reality of the present as well as the future. Unfortunately, in my riding, and I am sure clear across the country, the budget has ignored completely the concerns of people on fixed and low incomes, those who are seniors and who are struggling to pay their heating bills. We certainly cannot say that it has been an exceptionally cold winter and that is why the prices of home oil and gas have gone up. This is consistent.

These people are suffering under the weight of heavy oil and gas prices. They are having to make some very tough choices. Those are choices that we as parliamentarians should not allow them to face alone. We as a government and as members of Parliament should be able to reflect their concerns and address their daily needs.

Another issue is the airport security tax. Even with a 40% reduction in the airport security tax, about \$42 million will be taken out of the Atlantic economy. That is at the maximum. It will be up to \$42 million. However the government is only putting back in anywhere from \$6 million to \$10 million for airport security. Where is the other \$30 million to \$34 million going? It is going into general revenues. That was a tax put on after 9/11 to convince Canadians that air travellers would have to pay more, even though it affected airport travel and the profits of airlines, to have enhanced security.

We agree with the fact that there should be enhanced security at the airports but the amount of money still being taken from consumers is affecting not only consumer travel but the profits of

airlines as well. We are saying that the government should lower it even further. If a user fee has to be charged in that regard, a \$5 charge, similar to that in the United States, will be much more acceptable and reflective of what is put back into security, rather than it going into general revenue which is meant for other areas.

Another concern that the government has completely forgotten about is a shipbuilding policy for Canada. We have tried and tried. I know my colleagues from Halifax, Dartmouth, Acadie—Bathurst and my former colleagues Gordon Earle, Michelle Dockrill and Peter Mancini, have been trying very hard to get the government to focus its attention on the need for a national shipbuilding policy.

I know the former minister of industry, Mr. Tobin, set up a committee which came up with a report called "Breaking Through: The Canadian Shipbuilding Industry". It is a very good report but so far it has fallen upon deaf ears. We are not surprised by that because we have a finance minister who is quoted as saying that the shipbuilding industry in this country is a sunset industry. We could not disagree with him more. We are asking the government to refocus its energies and to put in a shipbuilding policy to keep our shipyards of Saint John, New Brunswick, Halifax, Marystown, Lévis, Quebec, Welland, Ontario and in Vancouver alive and well. These are very good paying jobs and the budget unfortunately has neglected that very important industry.

Regarding the military, unfortunately the \$800 million that has been allocated to it will go to pay the credit card and current operations overseas. It does not address the structural concerns within the military of acquiring new ships, Sea King replacement helicopters and other aircraft for that matter. We are telling the government that if it built those ships in Canada, it could have a naval shipbuilding policy which would then spawn a very good domestic shipbuilding policy. We believe that would be the way to go.

It is interesting in 1993, when the Liberals came to power, there was a \$42 billion deficit, yet they announced a \$45 billion infrastructure program over four years. By the way, I give them credit for the \$45 billion infrastructure program because infrastructure programs are very important for the country. However now in 2003, with an \$11 billion forecast, they can only come up with \$3 billion over 10 years.

• (1720)

I do not understand how on one hand the government can have a huge deficit and come out with more money over a shorter period of time, and have a huge surplus and come up with less money over a longer period of time. I do not understand that and that is why many cities are concerned about what is going on with the infrastructure program.

The Budget

On the issue of national parks, a lot of people who work in the parks associations across the country were virtually assured that there would be at least \$200 million in this budget, not only to preserve the ecological integrity of our national parks and wilderness areas, but also to include the 10 new national terrestrial parks and the five new marine parks.

Unfortunately, the budget was seriously lacking in sufficient funds for that. We can only hope that the government will realize the error of its ways and will understand that a good thing to do would be to get rid of the gun legislation, in my opinion, and use that money to fund national parks. That would be a very good legacy for the Prime Minister.

I know the Prime Minister has taken a special interest in parks. He has done it his whole life. I hope that before he leaves, he ensures that there is adequate funding to not only maintain the ecological integrity of the current parks that we have, but also the 10 new ones and the five marine protected areas.

One of the most important organizations in our country, especially where I come from on the east coast, is the Coast Guard. The budget announced \$75 million over two years for the Coast Guard. Unfortunately, that would not even buy a brand new icebreaker, let alone meet the needs of our Coast Guard men and women. We must address this issue a lot more positively than we have been doing in this particular budget.

We need to have clear indications from the government that again with a proper shipbuilding policy we could build new Coast Guard vessels and icebreakers here in the country. We could put people to work and give them the enhanced security training that we require for the protection of our east coast in terms of fisheries violations, environmental violations, illegal immigrants and drug detection as well. I believe that would not be a liability to the government but an asset if it invested in that particular way.

I will give the government credit because for five years I have been working on a bill called compassionate care leave. Finally, after two throne speeches, after the Kirby report, and after the Romanow report—and I give the hon. Minister of Human Resources Development top notch credit for at least getting the finance minister to announce it in the budget—effective January 2004 there will be a six week program for compassionate care leave. Unfortunately, although it is a toe in the door—I would have preferred that it was a whole foot through the door—it simply is not enough.

We have the funding in the EI program to meet these needs. Bill C-206 which I introduced over five years ago, and which is being debated for third hour debate on Thursday, will be votable next Monday or Tuesday. It states that any couple, parent or relative who has a child or a relative under a palliative care situation can prevent them from going into an institution. For example, currently a husband and wife who have a child through natural birth or adoption, one of them can take a year off for either paternity or maternity leave. They have job protection and are able to care for that child in their home.

What happens if a couple has a child that is diagnosed with cancer and has six to eight months to live? What do they do then? Bill

C-206 would offer that one of those parents, or any other relative, should be allowed to stay home with that child, have job security, and be with that child in the last days of its life. It would prevent the child from becoming institutionalized. It would offer job security to the family member. It would also give a little income to them as well because we all know the EI fund has quite a surplus in it. For every dollar that we would use on the EI fund to offset the lost wages of a particular individual, we would save \$4 to \$6 on the health care system because we would prevent that individual from becoming institutionalized.

This is one of the best programs that we could ever do in this country and I thank the government for doing that, initially at a very snail-like pace. I hope that all members of Parliament will support the bill and allow it to go to committee to have further clarification and discussion. If indeed that were happen, then the budget in that regard would be a good thing.

In closing, all of us should pray for peace in Iraq and pray for the people in the Middle East.

• (1725)

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the member from Eastern Shore for his work on his private member's bill, but that is not what I want to talk about today.

He just made some affirmations that must be corrected. He was talking about the first infrastructure program of the government being \$45 billion when we had a deficit. It was exactly \$6 billion: \$2 billion by the Government of Canada, \$2 billion by the provinces and \$2 billion by the municipalities.

It is important that if we are going to use numbers that are not accurate to then declaim a situation, that does not make sense. We must ensure that we use accurate figures.

The first infrastructure program was launched as a result of some of the work done by the member for Ottawa Centre and the member for Nepean—Carleton at the time, Mrs. Gaffney. It resulted in the federal, provincial, municipal infrastructure program of \$6 billion, \$2 billion to each order of government.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Actually, Mr. Speaker, my quote was \$4 billion to \$5 billion. However, if indeed we take what the hon. member is saying, that it was \$6 billion, comprising \$2 billion, \$2 billion and \$2 billion, is he then saying the \$3 billion announced in the budget is \$1 billion, \$1 billion and \$1 billion over 10 years? Is that the rationale that we are using? I just thought I would throw that back at him.

Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, following up on that, I would like to point out that the president of the FCM in his letter dated March 5 said yes, he initially had some concerns with regard to the infrastructure announcement and then said that he welcomed the clarification of the minister with regard to the fact that this was a down payment.

First of all, there had not been a 10 year program until this government came along. As the House knows, there was no infrastructure program at all until 1994 when, as my colleague mentioned, this government brought it in.

The Budget

The president of the FCM also mentioned that the budget contained many positive elements including the extension of affordable housing initiatives and measures aimed at curbing child poverty and increasing child care funding.

I would like to point out to the hon. member that the Canada child tax benefit will double to \$10 billion by 2007. In the budget for 2003 we will see an increase of \$150 and \$185 in 2005-06 which means it will go from \$2,632 to \$3,243 by 2007. This is certainly important in terms of the issues that I know the member has been concerned about.

I know that the member also mentioned the air security charge. I know that is an issue that continues to be of concern to that particular member and I appreciate his comments. The government has reduced it by over 40%. The government has made it clear that it is committed to ensuring the revenue from the charge is in line with expenditures, not to make money out of it, but obviously in line to ensure the enhancement of public safety when it comes to the airline industry.

I just want to put those comments on the table and welcome any further comments from the hon. member.

• (1730)

Mr. Peter Stoffer: I thank the hon. member for his comments, Mr. Speaker, but if the need for it is a user fee neutral expenditure why then is the maximum of \$42 million being taken out of the Atlantic economy and the maximum of \$6 million to \$10 million being put in for airport security. We still have about \$25 million to \$30 million extra that is going to general revenues.

If indeed the member is correct, then that money should be strictly for airport security and not going into general revenues. As well, the government has not yet addressed the fact that provinces can still claw back the child tax benefit.

The government of Nova Scotia still claws back the child tax benefit. Although the benefit is a good initiative, and the provinces do with it what they please, it still does not help the people who desperately need it. The federal government should have said to the provinces, "Thou shalt not claw back on a federal program". That would have assisted those people especially single moms with children and those on low incomes and fixed incomes.

Mr. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a budget is not just a financial statement or a statement on the financial health of a nation, rather, at its core, it is a statement about the health of a nation as a whole. It is not just an accounting exercise, but a reflection and representation of the values and vision that inspire and underpin it, of the sense of who we are and what we aspire to be as a nation and as a people.

Accordingly, as the member for Mount Royal I am delighted that this budget gives expression to the values and voices, the humanistic vision of my diverse riding. In particular, it addresses those core values that have permeated every encounter that I have had in the constituency and upon which I initially presented my candidacy for elected office.

First, the need for a universal, accessible, comprehensive, publicly funded, sustainable and renewable health care system. Second, the understanding that education is not only inextricably bound up with

the imperatives of a knowledge-based economy, but is the defining signature of a society. Third, that the protection of the environment is not only intertwined with the economy, but with the health of society as a whole. Fourth, that affordable housing is itself a crucial co-determinant of one's well-being. Fifth, as I have mentioned elsewhere, the question: Is it good for children? is not only the litmus test of a commitment to human rights, but a litmus test also of the normativity of the core values of a budget. Finally, that gender sensibility should be mainstreamed in the budget as it should be mainstreamed in all public policy, that women's rights are human rights as I have stated elsewhere, and human rights mean nothing if they do not also include respect for the rights of women.

I will address two priority concerns in this budget, health care and education, which reflect priority concerns in my riding as they do in my province as a whole.

During the course of a take note debate on June 11, 2002, in this Chamber, I identified eight strategic priorities for health care in my province and riding of Mount Royal. What I propose to do now is look at how each of these eight strategic priorities find expression in the budget.

The first and most compelling need, as I expressed then and restate now, is for an increased supply of doctors, nurses and other health care professionals to meet current and emerging demands. Increased health care funding of \$9.5 billion in cash transfers to the provinces and territories over the next five years could be used in part to hire these additional health care professionals, and \$16 billion over five years to the health care reform fund would assist staffing concerns, as would \$3.5 billion in the Canada health and social transfer to relieve existing pressures. There is still a concern expressed in the critiques of the Canadian Health Coalition, the Health Action Lobby, the Canadian Medical Association and the Canadian Healthcare Association that the funding is insufficient to address the human resources deficit in health care. This could adversely affect timely access to health care.

I am pleased that three of my strategic priorities namely, improving primary care, allowing for access to the right care, by the right provider, when and where they need it; strengthening of home and community care to relieve pressure on the more than one in five Canadian families who currently care for a sick or elderly family member in the home; and coordinating efforts to manage rising costs for pharmaceutical products, currently the fastest growing cost component of the health care system—and particularly an acute concern in Quebec—have found explicit expression in the budget in the form of \$16 billion for a five year health reform specifically targeted to these concerns of primary health care, home care and catastrophic drug costs.

The Budget

I am equally pleased that my four remaining strategic priorities namely, supporting the development of common indicators and monitoring so that we can measure, report and improve health care system performance; harnessing the potential offered by recent advances in information, Internet and communication technologies to enhance access to and better integrate the delivery of health services and electronic patient records; investing in new and enhanced health equipment like MRIs and CAT scans to reduce the wait time associated with diagnostic and treatment services and improve the quality of life; and renewing performance standards and expanding the use of standards also found expression in the budget.

• (1735)

These four strategic priorities have also found specific expression in the budget in the creation of a new Canadian health care transfer by April 1, 2004 to enhance transparency and accountability and ensure predictable annual increases in health transfers; in the \$1.5 billion specifically earmarked for a diagnostic and medical equipment fund; in the \$600 million to continue development of secure electronic patient records; and, in \$500 million for research hospitals to the Canada Foundation for Innovation.

Governments have also agreed to create a health council that will report regularly to Canadians on the quality of the health care system so that Canadians can see how reforms are in fact being implemented and how their health care dollars are being spent; in effect, the institutionalization of an accountability principle in the budgetary framework.

The ultimate purpose of the health care accord, which was entered into on February 4 and 5 and which finds budgetary expression in the 2003 budget, is to ensure that Canadians have access to a health care provider 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This, in particular, will find expression in the increased ability and capacity for the CLSC, such as those in my constituency and elsewhere in Quebec, to have the human resource capacity and the other resources to deliver such services as timely access. Canadians need to have timely access to diagnostic procedures and treatment; have better access to quality home and community care services; and have access to the drugs they need without undue financial hardship.

If I am making specific and repetitive reference to the importance of access, it is because it is crucial to a health care system and to the qualitative character of that health care system that Canadians will not have to repeat their health history nor undergo the same test for every provider that they see; and that they will see their health care system as being what it aspires to be: efficient, responsive, adaptive and renewable to their changing needs and those of their families and communities now and in the future.

As well, the government will increase funding to address the specific health needs of aboriginal people. The health accord, which again finds expression in this budget, will, in addition to strengthening the equalization program and in light of improved federal fiscal circumstances which underpin the budget, the equalization ceiling will be permanently removed on a going forward basis.

I will now move to my second priority. Education is not only the motor that will drive our knowledge based economy but is an investment in our identities as peoples. I make that kind of reference

because of the particular plural character of my constituency, one of the most multicultural constituencies in the country. In that sense, I am delighted in the singular budgetary investment in both access to post-secondary education and in excellence in university research, the whole with a view to establishing an educational system that is the best in the world.

I would like to make specific reference at this point to the budgetary investment and to the character of that investment in what will become a signature identification of who we are and what we can aspire to be as a people.

As we will recall, the government created the Millennium Scholarship Foundation to give young Canadians better access to post-secondary education. It established the Canada Foundation for Innovation to modernize the infrastructure of our universities. That has already awarded research grants to more than 2,400 projects, almost half of them in the health sciences, and it has created some 2,000 Canada research chairs to ensure that our universities can attract and retain the best faculties. I trust that these research chairs will also respond to the concerns that have been expressed about the need for a gender sensibility.

The budget also creates new ground. It creates new ground in the new investment specifically targeted which I think will make Canada a country that has the best educational system in the world and can compete on all levels with the best in the world.

Let me identify and enumerate, and for reasons of time I will do so telegraphically and enumeratively, the specific initiatives in this budget with respect to human investment and the investment in education.

• (1740)

First, the government will be increasing the budgets of the federal research granting councils by \$125 million a year. Those federal research granting councils, and I speak here as a university professor, and the importance of that research will enhance in all levels of society the knowledge based economy as well.

Second, we will be institutionalizing a substantial federal contribution to the indirect costs of research, something that had been a concern of universities as they had expressed it to us and now is addressed in the budget.

Third, we will seek to help students better manage their debtloads by amending the Canada student loans program. At this point, protected persons in Canada, like convention refugees, can now be eligible for student loans.

Fourth, the budget will increase our investment in the Canadian Foundation for Innovation by \$500 million, specifically for the infrastructure needs of Canada's research hospitals, and here it links up with the health care investor.

Fifth, it will extend new research funding to Genome Canada and the ALMA astronomy project.

The Budget

Sixth, and of particular importance, and this too responds to a need that has found expression and representations made to us over the past years and that now finds protection in the budget, the government will create the Canada graduate scholarships program. When this program is fully in place it will support 2,000 masters and 2,000 doctoral students every year and it will support them at levels that make graduate programs in Canadian universities competitive with the best in the world. This new program, for example, will increase the number of graduate scholarships offered by the federal government by more than 70%, to around 10,000 a year, and 60% of the new scholarships will be in the humanities and social sciences, again addressing a certain disparity and responding to a concern as expressed to us by graduate students across the country.

Seventh, there will be a \$12 million endowment for the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation to help expand its scholarships for aboriginal students.

Eighth, we will be contributing \$100 million toward the creation of the Canadian learning institute which will help Canadians to make better decisions about the education of their children.

Finally, and of particular interest and concern to my own constituency which has an increasing number of new Canadians in its midst, Canada's distinct knowledge advantage and its distinct capacity to make a singular contribution in a knowledge based economy is built by expanding the skills of our labour force and by helping all Canadians who want to work, including new Canadians, to apply their talent and initiative to productive enterprise. Therefore we will be investing \$41 million over the next two years to help new Canadians integrate into our economy, whether in the form of second language skills, in faster recognition of foreign credentials, or in pilot projects to attract skilled immigrants to smaller communities across the country. Our objective is clear: a new level of opportunity and potential to contribute for all Canadians, particular young Canadians.

I would hope that the particular priorities that I identified of health care and education, among the other, what might be called, social rights basket concerns, which reflect and represent not only the core values and vision of my constituency but I suspect the province as a whole, can make a dramatic contribution to the human welfare and the human condition in the country while making us competitive internationally in a human sense as well as in an economic sense.

• (1745)

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with the member's permission, given the world events just now, the prospect of war in Iraq and the profound financial and economic implications it might have, can he give us some sense of his feeling about where Canada is placed in terms of our economic prospects should the Americans unilaterally attack Iraq with the assistance of the British?

Mr. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Speaker, I intend to address the whole situation in Iraq later on this evening in the debate, but I will say that I believe the humanitarian situation, if a war is launched, really will partake, and I perhaps can put it best, in the principle of unintended consequences. Those unintended consequences, in particular, will be of a humanitarian character and I suspect that in particular they will affect the most vulnerable in Iraqi society, namely women and children who are already living in a very fragile infrastructure and the like.

I believe it will behoove Canada, as it will other members of the international community, to address humanitarian concerns. When we talk about humanitarian intervention, and if we want to put the best construction upon it, that humanitarian intervention should really be one where we seek to prevent this from happening. If we cannot prevent it from happening then we should seek to alleviate the humanitarian concerns once the intervention takes place, and then we should seek to participate in the human reconstruction of a society thereafter.

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Brandon—Souris.

It is a pleasure to say a few words on the budget. In relation to the budget itself, listening to part of the budget was a pleasure. In the budget there are a few measures which I would say every party in the House has been pressing to have implemented as they deal with child care and, in particular, as they deal with the cost of drugs in our country.

One of the crying needs in this country is the addressing of the concerns of seniors and people on fixed incomes. We have a tremendous amount of people in the workforce who are making slightly over the allowable wage. Under that, they would qualify for some sort of social benefits. They are trying to pay their way and yet they have no access to assistance when it comes to the cost of drugs in particular.

When it comes to our seniors, the one group in society that has built this great country of ours, the people who over the years have given us what we have and for which we are very proud and thankful, this one group, of all segments in society, is probably the one that has been the most neglected by the government opposite, and that is a shame. We have too many people trying to live on a fixed income from year to year. Everything else is increasing: the cost of living, the cost of food, the cost of transportation, the cost of heating homes, and we can go on and on. Yet for these people, the wages or the little pensions they get do not rise in comparison to the costs. Life just becomes harder for them. We owe a little more to the seniors in our country than to neglect them entirely.

Another group is neglected by the budget, despite a flash in the pan announcement which drew everyone's attention when there was talk about revamping the student aid program. What we did, and it is a credible thing, is that we made it possible for students from other countries coming to our Canadian post-secondary institutions to qualify for student loans. I have no problem with that. I praise it and I encourage it. We have to build this country, and for years it was built on the backs of people who came from other countries, and certainly we can continue to do so.

The Budget

However, we have in this country millions of young students who are trying to push their way, work their way, through post-secondary education institutions, and we have many who have completed that and are trying to find work. In order for them to be able to pay off their student debt, they have to offer a lot up, a lot of recompense. The sad thing about it is that in our country many of them unfortunately cannot find employment that pays significantly enough for them to be able to exist. Many of them, our brightest and our best, head south of the border where they can make more money and can handle the tremendous millstone around their neck that is called a student loan.

We hear people talking about young people who have a degree and who are coming out of university. They say, "So what if they owe \$20,000? Big deal. They will make good money. They will be able to pay off their debt." If it were only that simple. If they come out of university with a four, five, six or seven year degree, or degrees, and owe \$20,000, they are very lucky individuals. Many of them owe two, three, four or five times that much, depending on how long they were in the post-secondary institution. I have heard members say, "Why can't they pay their way through? Most of them are off during the summer. I worked and paid my tuition". I did too, Mr. Speaker, but the thing was that tuition was a lot less and people could make a lot more.

● (1750)

Tuition is not all of it. If a student decides to go to university and wants to obtain a student loan to cover tuition, that is possible. Student loans will cover regular tuition, a few books and perhaps a few minor expenses. What many people do not seem to realize is that most of the young people in this country do not live within or under the shadow of a post-secondary institution. They live in the rural areas of our country and have to come into the centres where the post-secondary institutions are. Whether it be the one nearest or in some other province, it does not make any difference; they have to find board and lodging wherever they stay. It means apartments, it means furniture and it means travel costs. That in itself is much greater than the cost of tuition.

Unless students' parents are wealthy and can help them, most young people have two choices. One is to try to suffer with the economic problems, which usually leads to them dropping out because they just cannot cope financially. Even with a maximum student loan around their necks, they still cannot meet the costs of a university or post-secondary education. The other choice, which too many students are taking, is not to go at all. They ask themselves why they should go when they know they cannot make it. They say they will go out and find work. When they do that, it means they usually find menial employment, which leads to layoffs, which leads to drawing from the unemployment insurance system, which leads to welfare and higher social costs. That then leads to some of them getting into trouble, which leads to other social costs. It goes on and on.

Society pays the costs of these individuals. We pay for their unemployment insurance, welfare benefits, prison costs, health care costs and whatever. Does it not make a lot more sense to invest some money up front and educate them so that they are contributors to society rather than a drag on the system? It is a no-brainer, but the government refuses to listen. We have many young people who are

not educated or cannot contribute simply because they cannot afford it, and that is a crying shame.

Other members have talked about the infrastructure program. We can talk about \$3 billion going into infrastructure. An extra \$1 billion of that, right off the bat, is going into the major infrastructure program, a program which we encouraged last year before it was introduced. From it we got funding to clean up the harbour in St. John's. In fact, I think if we look at the records we will see that I am the only one in the House who, on the record, recommended such a program, so I have no problem with \$1 billion extra going into that program.

What I have concerns with is the \$2 billion for infrastructure spread over 10 years. What it means to Newfoundland for our infrastructure needs is perhaps \$5 million or \$6 million a year. Everyone knows as well as I do what can be done for that kind of money in a country like ours. It is a drop in the bucket. It is perhaps the announcement in the budget that disappointed the most people in the country, and particularly our municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other things that is a crying shame, with which you would identify, is our complete lack of recognition for the athletes in our country. When we look at our population and geography, we have a country that turns out tremendous athletes. We are not putting money where we should to help those people reach the top and it is about time that issue was addressed.

We should look at the yearly basic exemption for small business, which would be a great benefit to them in encouraging students to become employed during the summer and in assisting small seasonal businesses.

I know that my time is up. I am just getting into it, but I hope my colleague from Brandon—Souris will continue.

● (1755)

Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his comments.

On the issue of support for university students, as we all know, tuition is determined by the provinces. In some cases, as the member quite rightly mentioned, I think, they have been going up significantly because of provincial decisions. However, this budget does address the issues of Canada student loans in putting more money in the hands of students, in students keeping a greater share of the income earned during studies, in keeping more money for merit based scholarships, and in broadening the eligibility for debt reductions in repayment programs. These are important elements at which the member should be looking in terms of the budget.

The Budget

In terms of infrastructure, again I always find it ironic when the fifth party talks about the national infrastructure program, because when it had its chance in 1984 and 1993, it ignored the FCM and the FCM national program on infrastructure. I again will quote the president of the FCM, who said to the minister: "Since then we have noted your reference that the total funding represented is only a down payment. We welcome this clarification". For years, the FCM wanted a 10 year national infrastructure program.

I hear the official opposition members harping away. They of course have always opposed a national infrastructure program, so we do not need any lessons from them.

I know the Newfoundland and Labrador municipal association members very well. I have talked to them. They were very happy about the moneys going to harbours. They were very happy about the fact that they can now plan for a 10 year program. I think that is what we are missing here. It is a down payment of \$1 billion, for 10 years, so they can plan. It is a down payment, as the minister said.

I would like the member to respond to those two areas dealing with loans and infrastructure.

• (1800)

Mr. Loyola Hearn: Mr. Speaker, I would certainly love to respond to both.

The member talks about some other benefits, which I did not mention because of the timeframe, in relation to student loans and scholarships. Let me say to the member that is wonderful for those who make it to university and do very well. An increase in scholarships, and more scholarships, is great for those people who have made it. My concern is for those who cannot make it, because we have many more who cannot make it than those who can, simply because of the lack of interest by the members opposite.

In relation to infrastructure, I would suggest to the member that if he has old videos he can look at the conditions of our infrastructure 15 years ago across the country in comparison to the state of the infrastructure today. He would see that the provinces and the country in general were much better off.

The member said that the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and others across the country were looking for a long term plan so that they could address infrastructure. Let me say to him that they wanted a long term plan, and they would love to have a 10 year plan with money in it. The problem is that they have a plan with absolutely no money. The provinces are in debt. They cannot pick up their end.

We have infrastructure falling apart and it is your fault.

The Deputy Speaker: I know the member was saying that through the Speaker.

A very brief question from the member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot.

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member would correct me if I am wrong, but is not the constitutional responsibility to spend money on infrastructure 100% belonging to the provinces? I do not understand why he is saying it is our fault when the provinces

themselves have failed to come up with the money to maintain their own infrastructure.

Mr. Loyola Hearn: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good point. This is the kind of political jargon that we get: "Oh, it is not our fault". When we have a two- or three-way cost sharing, it gives the government a great out: that it is not the government's fault but the fault of the municipalities or the provinces. Let me say to the member that the provinces put what they can afford into infrastructure. So do the municipalities, despite the fact that there has never been as much downloading on municipalities as there has been in this last five or six years from the present government. What they are always waiting for is for you to come to the table.

The Deputy Speaker: I just want to remind members to please address their opposites through the Chair.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Brandon—Souris.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, I will speak through you to the members of the government. They are the ones who should be paying attention when I stand to speak. I will speak very quickly because I probably will not be able to finish in the time allotted.

Budgets are pretty simple. They collect money from the taxpayers of the country and spend money supposedly on services to benefit those same taxpayers who pay the money in the first place. It is pretty simple. The money is taken and put into what is supposed to be seen as the priorities. We can talk about what Canadians see as priorities. It is their money.

One thing the government has a tendency to forget is that it is the taxpayers' money. The Liberals seem to think it is their money when they bring it in by the shovel load or the barrellful. They think they should have the right to dole it out on their own pet projects. Budgets are simple; money in and money out.

The problem with the government is that in this budget we had the opportunity of having Canadians analyze it. Canadians throughout this great country over the last number of weeks have seen the different areas of priorities and expenditures the government put forward in the budget. I can honestly say that I have not had anyone run up to me and say, "Boy, have the Liberals ever done a wonderful job with our money this year". Not one person suggested that maybe I should not stand up and take the Liberals to task because, boy have they ever hit the mark on this one and put the money to good use. In fact, it is quite the opposite.

A lot of Canadians have come up to me and said that just maybe the Liberals missed the mark on this one. The Liberals have tried the shotgun approach and hit every little piece they possibly could for whatever reason, and legacy comes to mind. They have tried to hit every little piece and quite frankly have failed miserably in trying to put that shotgun approach forward.

The Budget

There were a number of areas which Canadians felt should be priorities. Needless to say the first one was health care. Health care was the priority. Yes, the Liberals sat down and bullied the provinces and by the way, put back into health care the money that they yanked out of the system in 1993 and 1994. It was the lack of that money through which they destroyed the system in the first place and they are now putting it back in dribs and drabs and saying, "Are we not wonderful". The provinces and Canadians are saying that if the Liberals had not taken it out in the first place and put more resources in during that timeframe, the health care system would not be in the sad state it is in now.

Canadians wanted to see that as a priority along with the billions, and pick a number because it varies from \$12 billion to \$17 billion to \$32 billion, depending on which Liberal member we talk to. The fact is that the dollars put into the health care system in this budget were the dollars that were yanked out of the system previously by the government.

On tax cuts, Canadians also said to me, and I am sure they said it to other members in the House, "It is our money. We give it to the government by the shovel and the barrelful. It would be nice if we could keep some of it in our own pockets". Canada is one of the highest taxed countries in the OECD.

Canadians say that it would be real nice, if there are surpluses that we talk about that perhaps, just perhaps, there could be a change in the basic exemption. It would be wonderful if there could be a change in the basic exemption and people of all incomes could take advantage of it. Was there any of that in the budget? No.

Canadians also talk about the capital gains side of it, which we have certainly suggested should be struck. Was there anything in that area? No.

Was there any kind of tax relief at all in the budget? Yes, there was. There was 2¢ on every \$100 to employment insurance earnings. The Liberals say it is 12¢ but 10¢ of it was a previous budget commitment so really it was 2¢ that came off.

By the way, that is an insurance program which has anywhere from \$7 billion to \$8 billion in surplus a year which has accumulated to about \$40 billion. It has just been put into a black hole. In fact those people who are putting in the employment insurance premiums, not only the individuals, but the employers too, are being taxed substantially more to help balance the budget.

Let us talk about surplus and debt reduction. Has there been any identified in the budget? Well, there is a \$3 billion contingency fund but if someone in some department decides to put in another gun registry, perhaps the \$3 billion could be used for it. It is a contingency fund and if it is there at the end of it, perhaps it will go to debt.

●(1805)

We said a long time ago that it took a long time to get into this position. In fact it goes back to the Pierre Elliott Trudeau days where deficits were in vogue and started our deficit spiral downward. It took a while to get into that position. Perhaps it should take us a while to get out.

Our party said to put a line item in the budget and ensure that in every budget a specific amount went directly to debt reduction. Perhaps it could be a 25 year plan. It took time to get into it and it will take time to get out of it. We said to identify those numbers so that when we got revenue in from Canadians we could identify it and put it toward a debt reduction program. That is what Canadians are asking for. They want it. People come up to me on the streets and talk to me about it.

The member from Richmond Hill gets incensed when we talk about infrastructure. As the previous executive director of the FCM he knew it suggested that there is a \$15 billion deficit in infrastructure.

Let us look at what the government has done. It has taken the shotgun approach. There has been \$3 billion. There is \$100 million in the next budget year, 2003-04, and \$100 million in 2004-05. I refer to it as infrastructure Chinese water torture, a drip here, a drip there. That is all it has been.

Liberals can stand up on their hind legs and take great pride in this, but the member knows that the same executive director of the FCM has said quite emphatically that it is nothing but a down payment. CMHC needs a down payment when someone is buying a home. This is not even the beginning of a down payment, yet those members stand up and say they are wonderful because of this infrastructure funding of \$100 million for the next budget year on this particular program over 10 years. When the government says \$3 billion over a 10 year period, that is not even close to what is required by the FCM.

Canadians come up to me and say that it is a budget and that is very good and it is nice to know that the shotgun approach has dollars going into different areas. What they are really concerned about is the way the government is spending their money. It is called management. In this particular case with the government, it is called mismanagement.

If there are billions of dollars to be spent in different directions and which cannot be given back to the taxpayers, perhaps the \$1 billion that went into the gun registry was not really best managed on behalf of Canadian taxpayers. Perhaps that \$1 billion should have gone someplace else, to another priority, whether it be health care or tax cuts.

Today we learned of an untendered health care contract that went to a company that does retrofitting for automobiles. Heavens, there was also Groupaction. There was a thing called sponsorship programs where millions of dollars were expended with no reports and with no real benefit to Canadians.

There are so many examples of mismanagement that perhaps even the budget is a bit of a misnomer. Dollars can be thrown at all departments and they can waste it without being accountable to Canadians. That is what a budget is all about, being accountable to Canadians.

The last item I will talk about is one that is dear to my heart. One of the Liberal members talked about the wonderful dollars and the wonderful budget item on the APF, the agriculture policy framework. That is smoke and mirrors. That is the way the Liberals turn a phrase. They say they are doing wonderful things for different industries and different priorities. They talk about \$5.2 billion that was identified for the APF. I asked the member if he could tell me what timeframe that was, but I do not think he knows because he did not answer the question. That is quite usual for members of the government.

The \$5.2 billion he referred to in the budget is over six years. It is not \$5.2 billion this year. It is like the smoke and mirrors of the infrastructure program. There is \$3 billion but only \$100 million this year. It is the same with agriculture. Over that six year period, \$5.2 billion is less than what was in last year's budget.

The government can play with numbers. It can float the numbers. It can hide the numbers as best it can. That is what it has done in these budget documents.

• (1810)

The government believes sincerely that it has done a good job but I would like to pass this message on to the government of the day: it has not and Canadians will not be seen as accepting this budget document that is placed before us.

Believe it or not, we will vote against the budget when it comes before the House. I can honestly say that most Canadians will agree with us when we do that.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of ways and means Motion No. 2.

Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

[*Translation*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order adopted on Thursday, February 27, 2003, the recorded division on the motion stands deferred until Tuesday, March 18, 2003 at the end of government orders.

S. O. 52

EMERGENCY DEBATE

[*Translation*]

SITUATION IN IRAQ

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the consideration of a motion to adjourn the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration, namely the situation in Iraq.

• (1815)

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ) moved:

That this House do now adjourn.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I requested this emergency debate because I feel very strongly that we are experiencing a profoundly critical situation. I know that the people we have met and consulted with over the past two weeks are as sure as we are that this is a critical and dangerous, or at least worrisome, situation. But for most, it is much more than that.

As parliamentarians we have to be able to talk about it. We also have to vote on the deployment of troops, but that is not the sole purpose of the debate this evening.

I would like to begin by putting this extremely intense time into context. We have seen an inspections process led by the United Nations that works; not perfectly, but satisfactorily enough for both chief weapons inspectors at the United Nations. Saddam Hussein is—albeit for the first time and undoubtedly under the pressure of the forces that are building around Iraq—showing serious signs of cooperation.

The next report by the chief weapons inspector will be made public tomorrow. We do not know yet if it was submitted today to the Security Council. However, the chief inspector has already said he was very interested and quite satisfied.

Yet, despite these results that we were waiting for, the United States, backed by Great Britain and Spain, today told the Security Council that it had today and only today to make a decision to authorize the United States to attack Iraq.

The Security Council is made up of 11 countries, six of which are small countries susceptible to influence, particularly the great economic and financial power of the United States. These small countries resisted, they wanted to support a peaceful process. So, despite what these 11 countries wanted, the United States decided that there was no more role for the Security Council to play.

Yet, and I repeat this, the inspections worked to contain and disarm Saddam Hussein. But clearly, this was not enough for the U.S. administration. It does not seem to matter to the United States that the Security Council has ended up sidelined, even though it is the only body that is capable of taking action, under international law. It does not seem worried about starting a conflict that legal experts say that a conflict instigated against Iraq by the United States, Great Britain and Spain would be not only illegal under international law—this is on an altogether different level—but illegitimate or immoral, based on criteria reflecting public opinion around the world.

S. O. 52

It is important to keep in mind that in terms of international law, only legitimate defence can be used as a justification for attacking another country. The United States is not under attack, it has no right to counterattack under section 51, unlike what happened at the time of the al-Qaeda attacks, which had been supported by Afghanistan.

● (1820)

The Security Council, and only the Security Council, can authorize the use of force in such circumstances. But it has now been sidelined.

The fact that the apparently imminent conflict is illegal in that it contravenes international law is a very serious matter. This conflict is also illegitimate in many regards. The various secret services have confirmed that no evidence of a relationship between al-Qaeda and the regime of Saddam Hussein was found, in spite of investigations.

There is no comparison between the danger posed by Saddam Hussein and the war to be waged on Iraq. We are told that this super powerful army would launch 3,000 bombs against the palaces over a 48-hour period. These bombs may be very precisely guided, but the fact remains that these palaces are located in urban areas.

The NGOs have painted for us, at the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the picture of a humanitarian disaster. As far as Canada is concerned, the illegitimacy of this conflict would have been even greater had Canada gotten involved in it without first holding a vote in the House of Commons. Thankfully, and we are proud to say so, this has not been the case.

This has not been talked about a lot in the House, but I want to point out that there is every indication that a humanitarian disaster is anticipated. It is important to know that between 60% and 70% of the Iraqi population of 23 million currently depend for food on the oil for food deal administered by the Iraqi government. Food is distributed on a monthly basis in the form rations by 46,000 stores. The NGOs have told us that in that respect, this despicable dictator is doing a good job.

One million children under the age of five are chronically undernourished and at great risk of dying should the food programs stop. Five million people do not have access to drinking water or basic hygiene. It should be pointed out that following the 1991 attacks, hundreds of thousands of Iraqi, including a large number of children, died because water could no longer be treated for lack of electricity. Drinking water is in short supply. Iraqi people live mainly in urban areas.

I could go on and talk about refugees, whose numbers could be estimated to be as high as 1.4 million, and about the people displaced within their own country, who could be as many as 900,000. There is no mention of the enormous problems that this will cause.

It is not surprising that there were 250,000 protesters in Montreal, I am proud to say, on Saturday, according to the organizers. I was there. There were many protesters throughout Quebec: 18,000 in Quebec City, 2,500 in Rimouski, 4,000 in Trois Rivières, Gatineau, the Gaspé Peninsula, Baie-Comeau, and I may be forgetting others. People had a purpose in getting together. It was to show their opposition to an illegal and illegitimate war.

Quebec's national assembly voted unanimously in favour of a resolution. Quebec sides with international public opinion. There were also protests in the rest of Canada. They were, however, not as big. This was also true in other parts of the world, although certainly not in Milan, where there were over 600,00 protesters. People may seem discouraged and a bit depressed given the American offensive, which ignores public pressure.

It should be stressed that, in response to the attack the world's superpower would like to launch, there have been signs of an international public opinion which is still a delicate counterbalance, but is a new phenomenon that has not been seen until now and that owes its existence to the new methods of communication.

● (1825)

This movement experiences the same situations with the same information at the same moment. This is the positive side of globalization. This is the positive expression of this globalization, an expression of hope.

What huge wrong is the Bush administration doing to the American people? In what ways do they need their friends and what will they need from their friends after this attack? There are many reasons, including the fact that they will need to ensure that international order does not collapse.

To this end, it is important to state that the Security Council, despite our fear that it will be considered impotent from this day forward, did, in fact, show strength, an ability to lead an international debate, to discuss and come up with new means of keeping world order.

We have experienced many wonderful moments, but now we are stunned.

What are the objectives of the United States—I should say the American administration, because they should not be confused. What are their objectives? Links with al-Qaeda—as I said—could not be established. That was their first objective. Then they said it was the destruction of weapons of mass destruction. But there is no better way to destroy these weapons than through the inspections. Even Secretary of State Colin Powell was contradicted by the inspectors. The American administration came back to the links with al-Qaeda, saying it feared that Iraq's weapons of mass destruction were being supplied to or stolen by terrorist groups or by al-Qaeda even though between 1998 and four months ago, Iraq did no such thing.

Then there was the report that Great Britain plagiarized, which contained data from 1991. That is all I will say about that.

What is the objective of the American administration? Regime change. I will not repeat the Prime Minister's very sensible words from when he was in Mexico or on ABC. But why change the regime?

Some have said that control of this second largest oil reserve in the world is one of the objectives, if not the prime objective of the American administration. I do not agree. I think it is a major objective, but not the prime objective. However, I know that this is what a large number of Iraqis think.

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So, what is the prime objective? It seems to me that the prime objective is the document entitled “The National Security Strategy of the United States of America”, which was prepared under the direction of Ms. Condoleezza Rice.

• (1830)

According to this document, the United States, in these new times in which we are living since September 11, and also since the 20th century, has a new take on the situation.

Here are a few excerpts from the document:

Defending our Nation against its enemies is the first and fundamental commitment of the Federal Government.

They are referring to the U.S. government here.

Today, that task has changed dramatically. Enemies in the past needed great armies and great industrial capabilities to endanger America. Now, shadowy networks of individuals can bring great chaos and suffering to our shores for less than it costs to purchase a single tank. Terrorists are organized to penetrate open societies and to turn the power of modern technologies against us.

The text concludes as follows:

Freedom is the non-negotiable demand of human dignity; the birthright of every person—in every civilization. Throughout history, freedom has been threatened by war and terror; it has been challenged by the clashing wills of powerful states and the evil designs of tyrants; and it has been tested by widespread poverty and disease. Today, humanity holds in its hands the opportunity to further freedom’s triumph over all these foes. The United States welcomes our responsibility to lead in this great mission.

The United States, through its administration, wants to present the world with a hegemony, and holds the naive belief that democracy can be won with bayonets. Yet this attack on Iraq might well have the opposite effect, unfortunately.

Will this attack on Iraq convince North Korea? Perhaps it will spur it to quickly arm itself with nuclear weapons in order to gain some respect. Will it convince the international terrorist groups? On the contrary, that this attack on Iraq may well create a desire in young people to sacrifice their lives for objectives which they may not properly understand, but which the situation may encourage them to espouse.

As I said, the United States will be needing friends it respects and will need to accept that those friends can be totally opposed to their strategy. Far from leading to progress in the fight against terrorism, a commitment made repeatedly in this House, this strategy may very well hinder that fight, and involve us instead in a clash of civilizations, which we reject with all our strength.

In these, the dawning years of the new century, it is imperative for the international community to tell this superpower that might does not make right, that the only international law that exists is expressed by the institutions we know, the only ones that can save the world from anarchy.

• (1835)

[*English*]

Hon. Gar Knutson (Secretary of State (Central and Eastern Europe and Middle East), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with honour that I rise this evening to speak on behalf of the Government of Canada. Before I begin I would like to advise the Chair that I plan on splitting my time with the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier.

As the Prime Minister said earlier today, Canada has worked very hard to secure a peaceful resolution of the Iraq crisis and bridge the differences with the international community. Regrettably, the members of the Security Council were unable to agree on a way ahead.

The Canadian position has been clear from the outset, our commitment to the disarmament of Iraq and our support for the United Nations Security Council resolution 1441 have been unwaivering.

We recognize the importance of the pressure that the United States and the United Kingdom forces have brought to bear in supporting the work of the United Nations inspectors in the region. Moreover we have been consistently clear that if military action proceeds without the clear authorization of the UN Security Council, Canada would be unable to participate.

We will continue to work with our friends and closest allies, the United States of America, throughout the campaign against terrorism, in particular in Operation Enduring Freedom.

Although the Security Council has not been able to resolve its differences over the interpretation of 1441, its members remain united in their shared goal of the disarmament of Iraq. This too has been Canada’s goal since the outset. It has been incumbent upon us all to put in every effort to find a peaceful diplomatic course forward toward Iraqi disarmament. The disarmament of Iraq remains the shared objective of the entire world community, even if there remain differences among countries on the Security Council as to how best to achieve this end.

In meetings and many phone calls over the past few months, the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs have emphasized the need for Iraqi co-operation with the UN and for unity with the UNSC in its dealings with Iraq. We have repeatedly emphasized the need for a strong message from the United Nations Security Council to Iraq, pressing for Iraq’s disarmament, supported by a united Security Council. Over the past few weeks we have worked hard to support the efforts of the UNSC, even though we are not currently on the council. We offered ideas and constructive suggestions to bridge the differences of views in the council over the interpretation of 1441.

We regret the council has not been able to resolve its differences of views. The UN Security Council is the only institution that may have been capable of ensuring a peaceful diplomatic solution to the Iraqi crisis.

The current crisis in Iraq is not the last crisis that the international community will need to confront. The UN, and specifically the Security Council, must remain central to the international community’s efforts to rebuild Iraq as well as any future crises we may face.

Whatever happens in the next few days, we remain committed to the UN system as the best vehicle for addressing threats to international peace and security and for helping to foster a better life for people around the world. I have been pleased to see millions of people around the world expressing their desire that the UN will be given every possible opportunity to resolve this crisis peacefully. It speaks volumes about the extent to which, at the start of the 21st century, people everywhere see the UN as an indispensable part of their world.

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The days ahead however will be difficult. Our actions will continue to be guided by principles that have long been held by Canada and Canadians. These principles have stood the test of time. They work and they are as relevant today as they were the day the UN was formed. We know that working multilaterally has served Canadian values and interests well. Thus, we believe the UN must be central to any humanitarian response and post-conflict efforts.

We must now turn to look at how we, the international community through the UN, can help the Iraqi people in the days ahead, to deliver necessary humanitarian assistance to ensure that displaced persons can find protection should they need it and after a conflict to see Iraq on the path toward peace and stability.

● (1840)

We believe the UN must continue to play a central role throughout the crisis to deliver humanitarian assistance to the long suffering Iraqi people, seek to offer assistance and protection to refugees and internally displaced persons who may be forced to flee from their homes, support Iraq's reconstruction and help set the Iraqi people on a course toward peace and prosperity.

Canada already has contributed funds towards the UN's preparedness efforts for Iraq and we stand ready to respond to any new humanitarian needs which may arise. We know that nations of the world must work together if we are to build an enduring peace. Canada will play its role and the UN will be central to that effort.

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to quote the three speeches that were presented at the time the United Nations was created.

The first was by William Lyon Mackenzie King who was the chairman of the Canadian delegation. I am quoting excerpts because I do not have sufficient time to cover all the speeches. He said:

This Conference is meeting at a time without parallel in the history of human affairs. The present is one of those moments of transition when an old order is passing away. As representatives of the United Nations, we are all here to help lay the foundation of a new world order. The ends that we seek to serve transcend the limits of race and the bounds of nationality...

It is not the intention of the Canadian delegation to put forth in plenary session special amendments to the Proposals. Our delegation will express its point of view at an appropriate time and place on specific questions as they arise. Our sole preoccupation in any amendment which we may put forward or support at a later stage will be to help in creating an organization which over the years and decades to come will be strong enough and flexible enough to stand any strains to which it may be subjected.

We shall not be guided by considerations of national pride or prestige and shall not seek to have changes made for reasons such as these. We recognize the principle that power and responsibility must go hand in hand and that international security depends primarily upon the maintenance of an overwhelming preponderance of power on the side of peace...

In conclusion, may I express my firm conviction that the spirit in which we approach the great task of this Conference will determine the measure of its success. It is for each nation to remember that over all nations is humanity. It is for all to remember that justice is the common concern of mankind. The years of war have surely taught the supreme lesson that man and nation should not be made to serve selfish national ends, whether those ends be isolated self-defence of world domination. Nations everywhere must unite to save and to serve humanity.

There is a great passage also from the address by the Earl of Halifax, the chairman of the United Kingdom delegation. He said:

Here in San Francisco we have seen but the beginnings of a long and challenging endeavour. And there is a sense in which what we have done here is less important than what we have learnt here. We have learnt to know one another better; to argue with patience; to differ with respect; and at all times to pay honour to sincerity. That

the thought of many men of many nations should thus have met in a large constructive task will have a value beyond price during the coming years, as stone by stone we carry on what we have here begun. Time alone can show whether the house that we have tried to build rests upon shifting sand, or, as I firmly hope, upon solid rock, to stand as shield and shelter against every storm.

The final speech from which I would like to quote is by Harry S. Truman, the president of the United States of America. He said:

The Charter of the United Nations which you have just signed is a solid structure upon which we can build a better world. History will honor you for it. Between the victory in Europe and the final victory in Japan, in this most destructive of all wars, you have won a victory against war itself.

It was the hope of such a Charter that helped sustain the courage of stricken peoples through the darkest days of the war. For it is a declaration of great faith by the nations of the earth—faith that war is not inevitable, faith that peace can be maintained.

If we had had this Charter a few years ago—and above all, the will to use it—millions now dead would be alive. If we should falter in the future in our will to use it, millions now living will surely die.

It has already been said by many that this is only a first step to a lasting peace. That is true. The important thing is that all our thinking and all our actions be based on the realization that it is in fact only a first step. Let us all have it firmly in mind that we start today from a good beginning and, with our eye always on the final objective, let us march forward...

This Charter, like our own Constitution, will be expanded and improved as time goes on. No one claims that it is now a final or a perfect instrument. It has not been poured into any fixed mold. Changing world conditions will require readjustments—but they will be readjustments of peace and not of war.

● (1845)

He went on:

What you have accomplished in San Francisco shows how well these lessons of military and economic co-operation have been learned. You have created a great instrument for peace and security and human progress in the world.

The world must now use it.

If we fail to use it, we shall betray all those who have died in order that we might meet here in freedom and safety to create it.

If we seek to use it selfishly—for the advantage of any one nation or any small group of nations—we shall be equally guilty of that betrayal.

The successful use of this instrument will require the united will and firm determination of the free peoples who have created it. The job will tax the moral strength and fiber of us all.

We all have to recognize—no matter how great our strength—that we must deny ourselves the license to do always as we please. No one nation, no regional group, can or should expect any special privilege which harms any other nation...

Out of this conflict have come powerful military nations, now fully trained and equipped for war. But they have no right to dominate the world. It is rather the duty of these powerful nations to assume the responsibility for leadership toward a world of peace. That is why we have here resolved that power and strength shall be used not to wage war, but to keep the world at peace, and free from the fear of war.

Perhaps we should revisit these declarations of the founding time of the United Nations once in a while. My first point that I wish to put on the table is that these thoughts at the time are still worth our courage and moral conviction today.

There is another matter about this whole situation confronting us today which I think has to be understood, and that is the efforts and the time allocated for disarmament have not been sufficient. I would like to quote a gentleman who was interviewed on the CBC station here at the end of January, Mr. Jon Wolfsthal, who is the deputy director of the Non-Proliferation Project at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. I will quote excerpts of his radio interview on CBC local. He said:

—if you look at how long the process took in South Africa even, it took us two years to verify once a decision had been made to disarm, that in fact they had effectively disarmed. And 10 years later, we're still monitoring nuclear materials in that country. In Kazakhstan, Belarus and Ukraine we had to provide very concrete security guarantees to those countries as well as spend a lot of money. So, on the one hand yes, we do know co-operative disarmament when we see it. But this is not a one cookie cutter fits all circumstances type of situation.

If we are serious about disarmament, the inspectors are going to be the only effective way of achieving that and that's going to take a number of years. That may not fit the time scale of certain people in government or elsewhere, but if disarmament is the goal, we know that inspections work, but that it does take time.

...even though the Gulf War was a resounding military success in liberating Kuwait, we have destroyed more of Saddam's weapons of mass destruction through inspections after the war than we did during the military campaign. And I think that should be a lesson for our future activity.

That is the end of the quote by Mr. John Wolfsthal, Deputy Director of the Non-Proliferation Project at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

If indeed in the days to come, or hours to come for that matter, the world should be precipitated into a war situation in the Middle East, then I believe that it behooves us and parliamentarians around the world to ensure that the multilateral institution we have created, the United Nations, is supported and remains as relevant as it has been in the last few months leading up to the situation.

I would pray that we would indeed have the courage and the moral fortitude to do what needs to be done. If we need to strengthen the United Nations, we do so, and we look beyond today into the next 50 years and into the next 100 years, because we do not want to avoid war only today. We want to keep avoiding war for decades and centuries to come.

• (1850)

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, tonight we stand in a Parliament that is estranged from its most important allies and it is on the most important matter facing the world today. We stand here tonight facing a government that now opposes the enforcement of resolution 1441, a government that will play no role in the historic liberation of the Iraqi people, a government that will not be involved in the disarming of Saddam Hussein. That is a decision the Canadian government made today.

Tragically, the Prime Minister's abandonment of the Iraqi people comes the day after the 15th anniversary of Saddam Hussein's genocidal chemical attack on the Kurds in Halabja. The Kurds only yesterday observed a moment of silence to remember 15 years ago almost to the day when Saddam Hussein carried out one of a long list of atrocities in his attempt to rid the world of an entire people. Children, women and men were brutally gassed to death.

A decade and a half later here we are. Saddam Hussein is as evil as he ever was. He still has weapons of mass destruction. He still oppresses his people. He still supports terror. Though our Prime Minister fails to recognize it, Saddam Hussein is still our enemy.

Let us review how we arrived at this stage in the crisis where we find ourselves in today. I would like to review the advice that our leader of the Canadian Alliance offered the House in two previous debates on this subject. He said:

Let me be very clear here. The Canadian Alliance position is that it does not want to encourage or urge war. Our position states the following: The time has come for

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Canada to pledge support to the developing coalition of nations, including Britain, Australia and the United States, determined to send a clear signal to Saddam Hussein that failure to comply with an unconditional program of inspection, as spelled out in either new or existing UN resolutions, would justify action to ensure the safety of millions of people in the region from Iraq's suspected weapons of mass destruction.

That has been the clear position that the leader of the Canadian Alliance has maintained all the way along in this process. Further to that, our position has been clear, articulated and public as follows:

Should Saddam Hussein not agree to or not fulfil an agreement to unconditional and unrestricted access for UN weapons inspectors, or

Should the UN Security Council issue a declaration to demand Iraqi compliance and should Iraq fail to meet those conditions, or

Should some UN Security Council members falter in re-emphasizing their own past declarations,

Canada should stand with its allies in ensuring that Saddam understands that failure to comply will bring consequences.

That was our position then and it remains our position six months later.

Saddam has failed to disarm. The United Nations has failed once again to disarm him. Now is the time that we should be joining with our closest allies to disarm Saddam Hussein. That is why I am compelled to state the Canadian Alliance's deep dissatisfaction with the Prime Minister's government sad mishandling of the crisis in the disarmament of Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction.

The Liberal government has seriously injured the interests and reputation of Canada by refusing to support the effort of the United States, the United Kingdom and 32 other countries. Let us not continue to use the word unilateral in this debate. This is not a unilateral movement of one nation. This is a coalition of some 32 allied nations that have committed to this task of disarming Saddam Hussein from his weapons of horror.

The Prime Minister's reason for abandoning our allies is the failure to secure a second resolution at the United Nations Security Council. The Liberal government has chosen to support the symbolism of multilateral process over the substance of advancing the ideals of the United Nations. We have taken our sovereignty and subjected it to the veto of one or two nations, nations that are seriously implicated in conflict of interest in Iraq.

• (1855)

It is erroneous that resolution 1441 does not permit military action. It does and I will quote the words of the Prime Minister himself who said on January 30, "resolution 1441 will authorize action". He was right. Resolution 1441 called for serious consequences for non-compliance. The resolution also called for, "full, immediate and unconditional cooperation from Saddam Hussein". Thirty-two allied nations have recognized that. Canada has not.

Saddam has met none of these three requirements. Not a single member of the Security Council, no matter how sympathetic they are to Saddam, and some of those nations are very sympathetic, is willing to state that Saddam's compliance has been full, immediate or unconditional because it has not been.

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Nor has the Prime Minister at any time stated that Iraq has been in full, immediate and unconditional compliance. His own foreign minister has conceded that Saddam's behaviour has not met the standards that the United Nations put out in resolution 1441. In light of that admission, there is only one conclusion that the government should have reached; that Canada should join with her allies to disarm Saddam Hussein.

The Prime Minister talks about containment. He supports a policy of containment for Iraq. Listen to what he said on March 9. He said, "Saddam cannot do anything anymore". He said, "He has troops at the door, inspectors on the ground and planes flying over and he cannot do anything".

The Liberal position is that somehow Saddam Hussein can be isolated in some kind of a box and sanctioned into not threatening the Middle East or the international community. He has broken all sanctions. He has lived beyond, through and over and under the sanctions. He has amassed billions of dollars to himself while he continues year after year to categorically and step by step kill, torture and imprison illegally thousands of his own citizens.

Within this so-called containment is the evidence of chemical and biological weapons and support for international terrorism. A strategy of containment that tolerates Saddam Hussein's murderous regime to threaten the world through terrorism and technological reach is a failure.

The Liberal policy is unsustainable. It is ineffective. It is unworkable and it is dangerous. It is costing Canada's allies billions of dollars, a billion dollars a day at least, to sustain the military build-up in the gulf. The Canadian government has shouldered none of this burden but it is prepared to insist that the allies continue that great cost inevitably.

International unity is required for any containment policy. Yet given the Liberal anti-Americanism and its penchant for obstructing the efforts of our closest allies, international unity was not achievable through Canadian foreign policy. Given Saddam's ties to international terrorism, there is no question that continuing a policy of containment indefinitely will be dangerous in the extreme. Canada cannot afford to risk the safety of the international community for its own lack of resolve.

More than that, it is time for the government to undertake a number of other important steps to protect Canadian security and to protect our diminishing international reputation. The government should reassure our allies of Canada's commitment to security by outlawing all known terrorist groups, particularly those groups that operate in the Middle East. It continues to drag its feet on that.

We must ban the al-Qaqa Martyrs Brigade. We refuse to do that. That group routinely takes credit for suicide attacks in Israel and causes tremendous instability in the region. We must also outlaw the National Liberation Army. That is an Iraq-based terrorist group with links to Saddam Hussein. CSIS, our own intelligence agency, confirms that the groups raises money in Canada.

Finally, Canada must join its allies in banning Jemaah Islamiya, the al-Qaeda-linked Bali bombers, which can still operate with impunity in our country. This is outrageous. This is not a partisan comment I am making. Here is an international group that proudly

and gleefully takes responsibility for the Bali bombings, decimating hundreds of people including our friends and allies. Other countries have banned this group of murderers and this government does not. We wonder why we lose influence in the international community.

For the sake of both domestic security and international credibility, Canada must outlaw these and all other terrorist groups.

● (1900)

Finally, now that Saddam Hussein has chosen war, and we need to be clear on that—we wanted to see war avoided and Saddam Hussein appears to have chosen war—and now that our government has whimpered in appeasement, Canada's contribution will not be as it could have been.

We must not abandon the Iraqi people in a post-Saddam world. People agree that when Saddam Hussein is disarmed, others from within will move him along. Disarmament is the goal, but there will be some positive consequences. It is incumbent upon us: We should be there to help Iraqis build institutions of lasting liberty in the post-Saddam era. These ethnic and religious rivalries could persist in the country, with various factions vying for power. If the international community abandons Iraq when the war is done, the country could come under the control of just another menacing dictator.

Happily, we can report that a number of free nations have taken upon themselves the role to plan, along with ex-patriots who have been exiled from Iraq. Already the planning is well under way to begin to set up the institutions for a civil society in Iraq. Other nations have taken up that task. This international working group has not invited Canada to be a part of that, because Canada has not been there when it comes to supporting our own military in funding it the way it should and the way the Auditor General tells us it should. Canada has not been there in banning these international terrorist groups and so our allies have wondered why we should be involved in other things. And now Canada, or at least the Prime Minister, has made a decision that we will not be there standing to avoid war by presenting a united front against Saddam Hussein.

As Canadians, we have a lot to offer. We could be helping the Iraqi people cultivate a constitutional democracy that protects private property, a democracy that allows true elections, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of enterprise, and freedom of thought, along with all the freedoms that together constitute the natural interests of all people, including the Iraqi people. Canada has something to offer, but we have not been invited because of our diminished influence and role on the international scene. That contribution we could have made would have been a great act of humanity.

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It also would have furthered Canada's national interests. It is in our national interest. Historical evidence is very clear that democracies tend to trade more and go to war less. It is in our national interest that Iraq would be democratized. A process of democratization abroad, therefore, would serve our economic, political and security interests and the interests of all freedom loving people. We could have been there, advancing these causes, helping Iraqis to achieve theirs, but we have not been invited to be a part of this group. I asked the Prime Minister that question today and he refused to acknowledge it. We could have been there for them.

So we have a date to remember: March 17, 2003. Shakespeare warned about the Ides of March. This decision of the Prime Minister for Canada not to march is madness. History is clear all down through the centuries that when dictators have faced a united, allied opposition, they have backed down from their evil designs. But history is also very clear that when dictators believe that opposition to them will be fractured and divided then they will move ahead with their evil plans, with disastrous consequences. And further down the road, the cost of pushing back these twisted dictators has always been significantly more profound, especially in terms of loss of human life, than if these dictators had faced an allied, united opposition earlier.

Tragically, the United Nations has once again failed to live up to its own resolution.

Not many years ago, in the 1990s, when a Canadian general was begging the United Nations to get involved, to intervene in Rwanda, to stop a genocide, to stop a massacre, the United Nations failed, and over a million people, mainly women and children, were brutally murdered. A million people. It could be so easy to say this happened because the United Nations failed to act.

● (1905)

The United Nations failed to act when Canadian generals, among others, were saying, "Please intervene in the situation in Bosnia". Its delay in acting cost a quarter of a million lives. In Kosovo, the United Nations failed to act again, in 1999. It was only the action of NATO partners that stopped a massacre there.

We would all like to see the United Nations exist as a viable force for peace, but it continues to fail to act. It has done that again.

History shows that there will always be people who fully recognize that the price of peace is eternal vigilance. More than 30 allied nations are, with a grave sense of purpose, taking up that torch, that torch of eternal vigilance, a torch that was dropped from the failing hands of the United Nations Security Council. In taking up that torch, these 32 other nations will be taking it up for those who handed it off from the other failing hands who fought and died for freedom in the past. Those people will not have died in vain, because 32 allied nations are taking up that torch to stand for freedom.

Those 32 brave nations will win. Iraq will be disarmed, not because of anything the United Nations did but because of what 32 nations are about to do unless in the next few days Saddam Hussein should step down. Iraq will be disarmed. That will begin a process of freedom for the beleaguered people of Iraq. As history shows, the flame of freedom will burn with an increasing fervency in the hearts of the Iraqis. Though the pathway following disarmament will not be

easy, though that path will be difficult, as surely as night follows day that path will lead to freedom and democracy and a future of hope for the children, the women and the men of Iraq.

That is how history has unfolded in the past. That is how it has unfolded many times in the last century, when allied nations have stood strong against evil dictators. The difference this time is that Canada will not be a part of that allied group of freedom loving nations that will stand together to disarm Saddam Hussein. There will be freedom, eventually, for the people of Iraq. The part of this reality that is somewhat sad is that Canada has chosen not to be a part of that process.

Today we witness an historic divide, an historic realignment of geopolitical forces in the early part of this 21st century. We are witnessing this divide right in front of our eyes. The United Nations may or may not continue in its present form and NATO may or may not continue in its present form, but we are witnessing a new divide of geopolitical interests. Today our Prime Minister put us on the side of Syria, Libya, Iran, Iraq and China. The government has put us on that side, not on the side of Great Britain, Australia, Spain and the great emerging nations of the new Europe that experienced communism and have only recently broken free from it. Are we with those freedom loving nations? No, we are not. This is a sad day, a sad moment for us as Canadians.

The possibility of avoiding war is there, but Canada has let it slip from its grasp. Should Saddam Hussein not step down, our prayers and our hopes will be with those 32 brave nations who are willing to fulfill the UN resolution, disarm Saddam Hussein and eventually see peace and freedom come to Iraq. Sadly, Canada will not be part of that this time. Though we were there in the past, we will not be this time.

● (1910)

Our only hope is that in the future we will regain that fervency in our hearts for the principles of democracy and freedom, a fervency that once burned brightly. I believe it will burn again, but not with this government.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful that the House has an opportunity to debate the prospect of war in Iraq and the position that the Canadian government has taken in respect of that prospect. I say thanks to the Bloc Québécois for seeking an emergency debate and making this debate possible.

But I begin by saying that I do not think we should have had to rely on an opposition party procedurally for a debate about the prospect of war in Iraq. I feel that Parliament has not been treated well throughout the period leading up to today. Although we welcomed the Prime Minister's statement in question period, today was really no departure from that disrespect for Parliament, because the Prime Minister, instead of making a statement to the House either in the context of ministerial statements or seeking unanimous consent to do it in some other context, basically tried to fit what really belonged somewhere else into question period. It was not done as well as it could have been done.

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Tonight, we have an emergency debate. The Prime Minister kept saying that if we wanted a debate, we should cause one to happen, we should use an opposition day or, in this case, create an emergency debate. Yet the Prime Minister himself is not here. Instead, we have a very brief statement from a junior minister. It is almost as if the government does not have much to say about its position. It seems to me that it would have been much more appropriate for the Prime Minister or the Minister of Foreign Affairs to have been here this evening and for many more members of Parliament from all parties to have been in attendance to hear the respective positions of the parties in the House on the prospect of war on Iraq.

Compare this to the United Kingdom where, I believe, and perhaps it is over by now, there has been a debate going on today at Westminster. The prime minister there has, on many occasions, in the lead-up to the situation we find ourselves in now, spoken to that house. All members of parliament have been there to hear him, or at least it has been a full house to hear the prime minister and to hear others. There was a vote a number of weeks ago. There is a vote today, if it has not happened already. Yet here in the Canadian Parliament, we are having a rather pathetic excuse for a debate, a debate not initiated by the government, nor can we get any commitments from the government, ever, to have a debate that it causes to happen, or even better, what we would like, a debate that it causes to happen by putting down a motion of its own, and then to have a vote on the Canadian position. What would be so wrong with that?

Why is that a fantasy I have about a Canadian Parliament that does not exist, a Canadian Parliament where on a major issue of war and peace the government comes in and lays down a motion? It does not have to be long, just a paragraph which lays out its view of this situation. The Prime Minister comes into the House, gives a lengthy, intelligent and articulate defence of the government's position, not necessarily one that everyone agrees with but something that we can respect, and other positions are put forward. Why does that have to remain part of my fantasy life? Why can we not have that here in Parliament, in this very House of Commons? It shames me as a Canadian that our Parliament is so Mickey Mouse when it comes to these big issues instead of being the kind of parliament that it ought to be.

We do not have to compare the situation we find ourselves in now to just the United Kingdom. We could even compare it to things that I remember here in this House, the debates that went on at the time of what unfortunately might soon come to be called the "first gulf war", when in this House we had, on three different occasions, resolutions put down by the Conservative government of that day for debate and a vote. Now that comes near to starting to approach my parliamentary fantasy life.

● (1915)

Let us imagine this: important things happening in the world; the government has a position; it puts a resolution before Parliament; members of Parliament debate it; and then they vote on it. Why is that scenario so foreign to the Prime Minister's mind? Why is that scenario so foreign to the collective Liberal mind when it comes to Parliament?

When we have been pushing the Prime Minister for a vote, we have done it thinking that probably we would be in a position to vote against the government. We wanted to express our opposition to what we thought the government was going to do or might do.

On the basis of what the Prime Minister said today, which is that Canada is not going to participate in a war in Iraq in the absence of a second resolution at the United Nations, even though we have a different position about what the government should have done or might have been called upon to do if there had been a second resolution, we nevertheless welcome the Prime Minister's position today.

There would have been a way for the government to put its position today in a way that probably could have received the support of the NDP, the Bloc and perhaps even the Conservatives but I am not sure. I am not sure about the hon. member for Kelowna. I somehow think he would be offside. Yet the Prime Minister does not seek this.

Why not put down a motion that would enable Parliament to speak, three or four parties out of five, a motion that the Prime Minister could use to express the Canadian position to the United States and to President Bush? What would be so wrong with that?

I guess all we have to be grateful for are small parliamentary mercies; that we did not hear about the Canadian government's decision on a talk show in Chicago, during a lecture to a university in the United States, or in some other non-parliamentary venue.

We do welcome the Prime Minister's statement that Canada will not be part of a war in Iraq. The reason given by the Prime Minister was that there was no second resolution of the United Nations Security Council authorizing such a war.

I think this bears some reflection because we in the NDP had been worried, given some of the things that the Prime Minister said in the past, that the Prime Minister might have taken the position that resolution 1441 would be justification enough for Canadian participation in a war in Iraq. This seems to be the American position. The fact that the Prime Minister has not taken that position is a very welcome development but it is a fact that in the lead up to this decision today the Prime Minister said so many different things in the House that he could have taken any position today and cited something he said in the last three weeks to show that this had been his position all along.

We can call that a smart politician.

Hon. Art Eggleton: You're getting picky.

Mr. Bill Blaikie: Somebody said that I was getting picky. I do not think I am getting picky. I am noticing what was going on because I was asking a lot of those questions and I listened to the answers.

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Push came to shove for the Prime Minister when Canada could not, either by itself or in concert with others, get a resolution that would do the two things that seemed to me to be the goal of Canadian policy at the United Nations over the last three weeks, which was to preserve UN unity no matter what and if it meant providing a fig leaf for a war on Iraq that the United States wanted in any event, then that is what Canada was prepared to do. It is only because the government failed in its attempt to do that, that we have the position that the Prime Minister has taken today.

● (1920)

The Prime Minister had a choice when the Canadian strategy failed. He could have said that we would go with the Americans anyway, without the fig leaf and without unity at the UN, but he did not do that. We are really grateful for that but we are also grateful to the millions of Canadians who marched in the streets of our cities and towns on February 15, and on other occasions, demonstrating that they did not want their country to be part of a war that they saw as unjustified and illegal in terms of international law.

All those Canadians who were at the Manitoba legislature where I spoke on February 15, or at other legislatures and other places where Canadians gather, did not have the same position on everything but they were united. Their unity was in saying that they did not want their country to either be part of a war on Iraq or contribute to the logic of war at the United Nations.

Up until today I think a case could have been made that the Canadian government was still participating in the logic of war, that the unity and the resolution that it was seeking was to extend the time a little bit more but that we must make sure that in the end we do have a war but it is a war that has the fig leaf of the United Nations approval.

I do not think we should be sad, and by we I mean those of us who have been critical of the shifting Canadian position over these last several weeks, that there is no unity at the United Nations. If unity came at the price of the UN giving its approval to a war for which there was no real justification, when the weapons inspection process could have been allowed to continue, when we still had progress being reported from Mr. Blix, et cetera, it would have been a real shame to have had the United Nations, for whatever reason, be cornered into supporting such a war, because there is no case for a pre-emptive war of prevention. If this is the logic behind the United States' action against Iraq, this is a whole new development in terms of international geopolitics. It is a whole new doctrine for the United States, one that was announced on September 20 of last year, and it is one we should all be very worried about. What if everybody took that view? There is no case for a pre-emptive war of prevention. There is no case for a war to bring about regime change.

After listening to the Prime Minister carefully, it seemed to me that I first began to think he might do the right thing last week or so when he started to say that regime change was not what Canadians were interested in, that a war in the interests of regime change was unjustified. Therefore, no case for pre-emptive war prevention, no case for a war to bring about regime change, no case for bringing the weapons inspection process to an end because progress was still being reported, and no case for a war on the basis of this being part

of the war on terrorism because no case has been made for links between the Iraqi government and al-Qaeda.

I think the Prime Minister came to see all those things, reluctantly. I understand, in some ways, that reluctance. He wanted to be able to do both. He wanted to be able to save, and I use the word save here loosely, the UN and the United States all at the same time; save the UN through finding something that could unify the UN and save the U.S. through providing a United Nations fig leaf for what the United States was going to do anyway.

● (1925)

The poison pill in all of this right from the beginning, which made it so hard to listen to all the rhetoric about the United Nations coming from President Bush, was that right from the beginning the president basically said to the United Nations, "Either do what we want you to do or we will do what we want to do anyway". Now that is not multilateralism. That is not taking the United Nations seriously. That is seeing the United Nations as a political tool to confer legitimacy on something that one has decided to do anyway.

In any event, we now believe that the Prime Minister, if he is to be consistent with his position that Canada should not participate in a U.S. led war on Iraq with the coalition of the willing, or the bullied and the bribed, or whatever one wants to call them, if he feels that Canada should not participate in this particular war, then I do not think Canadian Forces personnel, those who are on exchange with particular American units that are going to be involved in this war, should be allowed to participate in the war either. It would be inconsistent and hypocritical on our part.

I am not talking about the ships in the gulf. They are there as part of the war on terrorism. We may have had our disagreements with the government at the beginning on this but that is not what I am talking about here. I am talking about the 30, 35 or however many there are on normal exchange that may now be participating in the war on Iraq. If this is a war that we are not participating in then those people should be called home. It just makes common sense to me and it seems to me it would to other Canadians as well.

The NDP position is that these people should be recalled until such time as there are assurances either that their units are not participating in the war on Iraq or that their units are no longer participating in the war on Iraq. If the Prime Minister wants to be consistent he should be saying that, instead of what he said to me in the House earlier today when I asked him the question that I asked in question period.

What should Canada do now? It seems to me that Canada should now, given the Canadian government position, be urging the United States to change its mind. Maybe it is too late. It certainly seems that we are indeed at the 11th hour. Half an hour from now President Bush will address the nation and the world, so to speak, but it seems to me that it is never too late for a friend, however damaged our relationship with the United States might be, although I heard the American ambassador say only last week that he did not feel there would be any lasting damage to Canada-U.S. relations. It seems to me that if the Prime Minister really believes in the position that he articulated today in the House the follow through on that should be to urge President Bush to reconsider his position.

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Failing that, there are a number of other lesser things we could be urging upon the Americans. Our foreign affairs critic, the member for Halifax, mentioned one of them today in the House, and that is that at the very least we could be urging upon the United States, if it insists on having a war on Iraq, that it should not be using depleted uranium. The Canadian Forces do not use depleted uranium. I believe I am right in that assertion. However the American forces do use depleted uranium. They used it in Kosovo and certainly in the gulf war of 1991. This is a completely unacceptable form of weaponry in the sense that it has a long term effect on people far beyond anything that is created as an immediate consequence of the war. I would urge the Canadian government, the Prime Minister and the responsible ministers to communicate to the United States in strong terms that depleted uranium should not be something that is part of the U.S. arsenal.

If we as a Parliament have the opportunity, perhaps through a resolution approving the government's position, but also doing this, urge Saddam Hussein to rethink his position.

• (1930)

In this eleventh hour perhaps Saddam Hussein could say, "If it comes to choosing between my vanity and my regime and having my people blown to hell by the strongest military machine on the face of the earth, maybe I will take a walk, maybe I will leave". If he wants to cite the ancient verities as he sometimes does, let Saddam Hussein have the wisdom of the real mother in the story of King Solomon and the two mothers who wanted to lay claim to one baby. The king said, "The baby cannot belong to both of you so I will cut the baby in half and one of you can have one half and one of you can have the other half". It was the real mother who said, "That is fine. She can have the baby", because in the end she cared more about her baby than she did about her particular claim.

This is the kind of wisdom I would pray that Saddam Hussein has tonight, that he would put the welfare of his own people, given what we know is already fixed in the mind of the American administration, that he would have the welfare of his own people so much in mind that he would be willing to take the walk that he is being called upon by President Bush to take.

Perhaps that is our only hope at this moment. Let us hope that something happens for the good and that war can be avoided even at these last moments.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time tonight with the member for Cumberland—Colchester.

The world is on the edge of a war that could have terrible consequences within and beyond Iraq. Of course, one question is, what will Canada do? The larger question is, what will the world do about a brutal regime in Iraq, about a United Nations that is deeply divided, about the threat of weapons of mass destruction?

For his part the Prime Minister today said, "Canada will not participate". That is certainly his trademark in this world.

Canada has not participated in building a relationship with the United States that would have allowed us to counsel prudence on the president. We have abandoned that role and left it to Britain. Canada has not participated in any serious way in bridging the differences

across the Atlantic, a role that caused us to be one of the creators of NATO and which we have now abandoned. Canada has not participated in any significant way in sending troops to Iraq; in fact by sending our scant troops to Afghanistan, we made it impossible to participate in any conflict in Iraq. At the United Nations we waited so long before lobbying in a last minute compromise resolution that it was doomed before the first phone call to the White House.

Let us look very carefully at what the Prime Minister said today when he spelled out his latest version of Canada's position, which is not to participate. He did not talk about international law. He did not talk about the havoc that could be caused if Saddam Hussein unleashed his weapons of mass destruction. He did not talk about the suffering of the Iraqi people. He did not talk about the reconstruction of the region after a conflict that could be horrible. All he said was, "If military action proceeds without a new resolution of the Security Council, Canada will not participate".

The issue for him is not legality. It is not justice. It is not what is right or what is wrong. It is only a procedural issue. There is not a new resolution, so Canada will stand aside.

The Prime Minister does not even argue that a new resolution is needed. Yet for governments that take these questions seriously, that is a major question. Tomorrow the British government will publish a considered legal opinion which I expect will argue that existing resolutions already give the United Nations the authority it needs to act against Saddam Hussein.

Does Canada have a different view? When the Prime Minister decided that the role of this country would be to stand aside, did he ask the legal opinion of the experts in international law who work for Canada? I asked him that in the House of Commons today and he would not answer. If he asked them, why does he refuse to publish their advice? I suspect that this decision was taken not on the basis of international law, not on the basis of international principle, but on polling done for the Liberal Party in Canada that said, surprise, surprise, war is unpopular.

Of course war is unpopular. So are weapons of mass destruction. So are terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. But if everyone stands aside, then those evils prevail.

I personally do not believe there is a direct link between al-Qaeda and the Saddam Hussein regime. Certainly none has been proven. However I recognize that what al-Qaeda did with hijacked aircraft Saddam could do, and has done, with his weapons of mass destruction. For more than a decade he has treated the United Nations resolutions with contempt. Let us be clear, if the Bush administration had not forced the issue he would still be ignoring those resolutions. There would have been no inspections, no chance of removing those weapons peacefully.

I believe it would have been wiser to allow more time for the inspectors to carry out their work. I hoped the Security Council would have found a way forward. I wish Canada had played a larger role and had intervened much earlier, but that did not happen so the question is, what do we do now? The legality of any intervention is key.

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● (1935)

Canada's legacy, if I may use that word, is to support international law. Are interventions in Iraq legal? If they are, we should support them. If they are not, we should not. Did the Prime Minister ever ask? Will he publish the opinion of Canada as Britain and other nations publish their opinions?

The next step is for Canada to begin immediately to prepare to put back together whatever Saddam Hussein and his weapons, and a war, might tear apart.

The question of reconstruction is an area of Canada's natural and quite exceptional strengths. We should be spelling out the ways in which we will help rebuild the region again. The British are ahead of us here, too. They have already set out detailed proposals as to how they would help in dealing with reconstruction of the region.

We should be leading other countries which are good at mediation and reconstruction. We should be talking to the Nordics. We should be talking to Japan. We should be talking to countries that have lived through similar experiences, like South Africa. We should be taking initiatives and we are taking none. Canada does not participate under this government.

The United States has set up a reconstruction proposal. Again, let us be frank. That task is better handled by countries and by agencies who are not superpowers. A reconstruction team needs to be built and Canada must play a leading role in building it.

I look forward to an opportunity to expand on that theme later but I want now to pass my time to my colleague from Cumberland—Colchester.

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Mr. Speaker, this is a very difficult evening. I find it very sad that we are actually at the threshold of a war. We are here in this nice, warm, dry room, safe and protected, and in another land people are so fearful for their lives and the lives of their children, fearful for their houses and everything they have. It just seems to me to be such a failure by all of us, such a failure of diplomacy, that people are faced with this right now, tonight. We can just imagine what the families in Iraq are doing, what they face and whether they even have a clue about what is coming at them and what the consequences might be, and whether there might be hundreds, thousands or tens of thousands of casualties and whether whole families will be obliterated.

It is such a sad night. It is hard to believe that we are at this point. I did not think we would be, but it sounds like we are. It is hard to believe that diplomacy has failed so badly that we are at this point. I do not believe that there is any need for it. I do not think it ever should have happened.

We all agree with the problem. It is unfortunate and we all agree with the problem. All countries agree with the problem, even those that are so aggressive at fighting the actions by the United States, Britain and Spain. Even those that are so aggressive in opposing them agree with the problem. They just do not agree with the solution and the strategy and that is where it is such a terrible failure of diplomacy.

It is hard to believe that families in Iraq now are digging holes in the ground to try to find protection for their families, to try to find

some way to avoid the war. It is hard for us in this room and in this country to believe that this is what it has come to. Again, we agree with the problem. We just do not agree with the solution. I just heard the Canadian Alliance member talk about the failure of the United Nations. He listed all the failures of the United Nations. To me, it is not a failure of the United Nations. It is that we have failed the United Nations.

We have failed the United Nations. The Security Council passed a unanimous vote to engage Hans Blix to go to Iraq and do his job, to do his weapons inspections and verification. It was a unanimous vote, but why are we failing to allow that man and his team to do that job? What happened? Why did we change direction? Why did some people and some countries change direction after they voted unanimously to hire this man to do the job? It puzzles me. I do not understand. Why did they vote for it in the first place if now they are not going to allow him to do the job?

I believe that this man is very credible. I think he is doing a competent job. It is not going as fast as any of us would like and it is not as successful as any of us would like, but meanwhile no one is dying. If we can continue this process, even if it is not working as fast and as effectively as we would like it to, as long as people are not casualties why not give it a chance until Dr. Blix says the system has failed and he is not making progress? He has not said that. He has said he is making progress. It is not going as fast as he wants, but he is making progress.

I have always thought that when the United Nations passed resolution 1441 that was a reasonable path to follow to solve the problem. All of a sudden we have abandoned it, so we have abandoned the United Nations. We have failed the United Nations. The United Nations has not failed us. I take great exception to that.

I just think it is so sad that we are at this stage. I am so puzzled at the developments and how we got here. Some people argue that resolution 1441 gives them the right to go to war, but when the resolution was proposed last fall, the original draft said that if Iraq did not comply it would result in a military conflict. Those words had to come out because it would never have passed. The words "military conflict" were taken out and the words "serious consequences" were put in, because "military conflict" was not acceptable to the United Nations. Now some people are saying that serious consequences means military conflict, but it never would have passed had those words been in there. It puzzles me why that suddenly has changed.

● (1940)

It is really sad. It is sad that Canada has not played a more important role from the very beginning. We have such power around the world. For a country that does not have the arms, whether we are at full force or not, we are so respected. We will never be a superpower from a military point of view, but we can be a superpower from a diplomatic point of view. Everybody respects Canada's opinion. They have for a long, long time. We built up that reputation. We earned that reputation. We have wasted it in this case. We have not used it.

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We could have been in there in the first place trying to influence the U.S. policy, trying to help it make a decision to do this a little differently, because again, all the countries I know of agree that the problem is the belligerent leader in Iraq. That is the problem. Everybody agrees with that. It is just the strategy and the way it was introduced that are the failure, in my opinion.

Resolution 1441 was a stage in the path. When we got to the end of resolution 1441, when the weapons inspectors either succeeded or failed to eliminate the weapons of mass destruction, then there was another step. There was always intended to be another step. That step now has been circumvented. It is not ever going to happen, but Canada could have played a role to try to get consensus. There was never an attempt to get consensus. There was a plan put on the table, with "this is it", but there was no attempt to get consensus, no attempt to ask France or Germany or China what they thought. That was never done. It was, "Here is the plan". I believe that was the failure in diplomacy.

We could have played a part in this. We could have tried to help bring about that consensus, but we did not do it. We sat on the sidelines and we were invisible, no matter what anybody says. We could look at the news any night and hear what France was saying, what Germany was saying, what Spain was saying, what Portugal was saying, and what their positions were, but we never heard what Canada said. Canada was invisible. Right up until the very last few weeks, Canada was invisible. We should have been involved from the beginning.

We should have been trying to influence the U.S. We are its closest neighbour. We are its biggest trading partner. We are the country that understands the United States better than anybody. We should have been there trying to influence its direction. If we had tried earlier, maybe we could have saved a lot of trouble.

However, it takes risk to do these things. We cannot stand and be counted on these things without taking risks. The government chose not to take any risks, to stay back, to stay behind the curtains, to not come out and state our position until it was too late. Then we were so far in the dust that nobody listened to us. It is just a real shame. It was an opportunity to re-establish and continue to build on our wonderful reputation, an opportunity that we as a country lost.

As members of Parliament, we are lucky. We get to travel around the world. Everywhere I go, I am amazed at the respect people have for Canada and how they respect our opinion. I was at an OAS meeting and all the representatives there said that Canada was so important to them. They said, "We know that you have problems dealing with that giant next door, but imagine the problems we have, our little countries, with our little economies, with different languages. We have a much bigger problem dealing with that giant than you do. We want you, Canada, to be there to help counterbalance the difference between us". They look to Canada.

I will never forget that meeting. They all spoke up and said they were so glad that Canada was a part of the organization, that they look to Canada to help them and provide counterbalance. We did not play the part this time. People were counting on us to be that counterbalance and we did not do it.

Here we are, at this very sad stage that is so hard to believe. It is so hard to believe that people, maybe tomorrow or maybe the next day, are going to be killed because of a failure in diplomacy. We are part of that failure. It is not a failure of the United Nations. It is a failure of all of us. I am just so sorry that we are at this stage.

•(1945)

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not often rise in this House and say with what great disappointment and sadness I am able to express not just my views but primarily the views of our constituents on what we have been hearing on this most sad scenario, the pending war on Iraq.

Permit me to go back to just about four years ago, when we had the war and the bombing in Yugoslavia. We had a debate in this honourable House. I remember rising to my feet at that time to say what a sad moment it was as we were leaving one century, going into the new millennium, and that hopefully we would rid ourselves of war and bring peace, prosperity, health and happiness throughout the globe. I remember that at that time we had visitors from the United States. There was a joint Senate and House of Commons committee. We had with us some guests from the United States, Mr. Robert McNamara, former U.S. defense secretary, and General Lee Butler, retired commander-in-chief of the U.S. defense department. They talked about what happened in Vietnam. They said if they only knew then about what happened back in Vietnam, they obviously would have made different decisions.

Now I would like to fast forward for a moment to what we are faced with here today. It is great that members get up. The former leader of the Alliance Party spoke very eloquently about his position and we just heard from the Conservative Party, but what everybody has failed to understand is why the UN was designed. It was designed to prevent war, not to bring forth resolutions promoting war. What has happened over the past decades, let me say to my colleagues, is that we have weakened the UN because of our own lack of contributions, financial contributions. One of the nations that has failed miserably to pay its bills is the United States of America. Sadly, those are the facts.

I have to go back in history because the past always affects the future. I remember when on Kosovo in 1998 the then NATO secretary general, Mr. Javier Solana, said that "the solution to the problem is not in signing papers, it is in compliance". I said that I agreed with him. When the United States today insists on compliance, on enforcement, I say yes, they are right, we should be moving in that direction.

But as the former leader of the Alliance said, what a hypocrisy. I too now have to say, what a hypocrisy on behalf of the United States, because let me remind all members of so many resolutions in the past. For example, there was resolution 194 from the General Assembly in 1948 for the right of the return of the refugees to their homeland on the Palestinian issue. Year in and year out, the resolution has been brought forward and ignored. Most recently, there was the resolution on Jenin. Why did we not ask for compliance? Why did we not ask for enforcement? There were the many resolutions on Cyprus for the return of the missing people. There was the resolution asking for the illegal occupation of Cyprus to be resolved. Why are we not asking for compliance? Why are we not asking for enforcement? Why all of a sudden are we so insistent that on resolution 1441 we must have compliance? That is the irony today.

Moreover, as the previous speaker from the Conservative Party said, resolution 1441 had no mention of military action. Now today we have the gang of war: the United States, Great Britain, Spain and Portugal, the big powers of the world. What happens in Spain if there is an uprising in the Basque region and there is bombing and there are murders? Are they going to pass a resolution to say let us send the planes in, let us start bombing? No, I do not think that is the way it should be. It is very sad in times like these, especially when the chief inspector, Mr. Blix, has said repeatedly that we are making progress, that we are further ahead today than we were a month or two ago.

• (1950)

The international community knows it is moving in the right direction. The head of the nuclear society said that we are making progress. My question is, why did we appoint these people in the first place?

Here we have a leader in Saddam Hussein who, as I said about Slobodan Milosevic, I do not support. I would love nothing better than to see him moved away from his power throne so that the people of Iraq can start living peacefully democratically to raise their children, educating their families and creating prosperity.

These are indeed very sad moments, but I know that the moral case for immediate war crumbled when the UN inspectors reported, "No evidence of ongoing nuclear or nuclear related activities in Iraq". There was no ambiguity in this statement. Yet Colin Powell and all the American representatives chose to put it in one ear and out the other.

Millions and millions of people right across the globe are expressing the same view. Can we all be so wrong? Can Nelson Mandela be so wrong? We all know what Nelson Mandela said. We know what Bishop Desmond Tutu said not too long ago. We know what citizens of the world said. We know what Canadians said Sunday at noon here on Parliament Hill. Give peace a chance. What chance are we asking? We are asking for the inspectors to continue doing their work.

Trying to tie terrorism with Saddam Hussein is wrong. We know that this war has nothing to do with terrorism and everything to do with vested interest; interest in oil for example and so many other interests. However, we do not want to take it in that direction. We want to create and continue supporting the body called the UN. If we

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start tampering with it, we may weaken it as we are doing right now. The rule of law that we talk about is often discussed here in the House

Mr. Speaker, I neglected to mention that I will be splitting my time with the member for Kitchener Centre.

It is imperative today that we allow these discussions at the UN to continue, that we permit the inspectors to continue doing their work. There were 250,000 people the other day in Montreal sending the same message: we want peace not war.

Should we prepare? Of course we should. Should we always have our guard up? Of course we should. Are we here to fool ourselves and say that nothing will happen again if we dethrone Saddam Hussein? On the contrary, we must always be on guard.

My constituents in Scarborough Centre and other Canadians whom I have spoken to are very concerned. However, if today a precedent is being set by asking for enforcement and compliance of resolution 1441, then it is incumbent upon the United States to lead the way and to lead by example and all the other resolutions that have been there will come forward again in the future. The Middle East issue is a very important issue to world peace. The Cyprus issue is a very important issue to world peace. The Kurd issue is just as important. I was reading the other day an article by Mr. Haroon Siddiqui who writes for the Toronto *Star*. He talks about the rule of international law. He said:

Iraq has not invaded America. It is not capable of it. It is not threatening to. Nor is it threatening anybody else. The argument that war must be waged to protect Americans from Saddam is simply not credible. Even less so is the attempt to link Iraq to al-Qaeda. If one accepts Bush's logic of invading those who, knowingly or unwittingly, financed, hosted or helped terrorists, then Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Pakistan and Qatar should be attacked long before Iraq.

We are not talking innuendo and hearsay. We are dealing with facts. We know what is going on out there. This unjustified effort on behalf of the United States that seems to have blinkers right now is unacceptable.

• (1955)

Mrs. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to participate in tonight's debate on the situation in Iraq.

I represent the riding of Kitchener Centre. The population of my riding and indeed Waterloo region is well known for its ethnic diversity. As a matter of fact, we are the fourth largest settlement area for new Canadians in Canada. Immigrants from all over the world have chosen Kitchener as their settling place as they made their home in Canada. Some of my constituents have families in Iraq. The situation in Iraq has evoked intense emotions from all corners of Canada and these emotions reverberate strongly in Kitchener Centre.

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Canada has always been an advocate for global peace and security, earning the respect of all nations. Canada's position on Iraq has been clear from the outset. Our objective is the complete elimination of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction by peaceful means and in accordance with the recommendation of the United Nations Security Council. As a member of Parliament it is not very often that many of us receive phone calls praising the action of the government. It simply is not human nature. It is far more likely that we hear from constituents when they are unhappy with either the position of the government or the position of a debate in Parliament. It has been my experience that the situation in Iraq has been quite different. Constituents are pleased with the government's action.

As a matter of fact, a resident of my riding, Ron Hiller, wrote:

I am impressed with what the Prime Minister is saying and doing in regard to trying to avoid a war in Iraq. Please urge him to continue his efforts. It doesn't get more important than this.

Indeed, it does not.

It is because of these significant implications that we must work through the United Nations. When the Minister of Foreign Affairs appeared before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade one of the questions I posed to him was as important as the tension in Iraq. I asked, can we in fact imagine a world without the United Nations? For over 50 years multilateralism has been a defining quality of Canadian diplomacy. Today, in the face of imminent conflict, we continue to try to build bridges and that is certainly what my constituents advocate at this time.

I found some comments made by members opposite to be interesting. Despite the fact that we may not be packed in the House, one of the beauties of having this proceeding televised is that I know there are many people watching this on their television sets, as indeed I was for one of my colleagues opposite.

We must appreciate the fact that the soft diplomacy, the ability to build bridges, which has been the hallmark of Canada, is not necessarily something that one reads about on the front pages of the newspaper. I know for a fact that our Prime Minister worked very diligently with our good friend in the United States, President Bush, and urged him to go to the United Nations because that was our preferred course. That was the course that Canadians and the Canadian government recognized was the way to go.

We must consider the impact that unilateral action will have on the UN. The UN Security Council has been unable to agree on a new resolution authorizing military action. I would like to point out that our ambassador to the United Nations, Paul Heinbecker, is actually a hometown boy of Kitchener. We have watched with a great deal of pride to see not only the kind of representation that he has given Canada but the leadership he has provided in this very important multilateral UN milieu.

For many Iraqis the UN has been an essential lifeline operating the world's largest food distribution operation, distributing food through 46,000 ration agents throughout Iraq. Think about that. It is like having a corner store, only instead of having the stock supplied domestically in a free trade market the food is actually supplied by the United Nations. These 46,000 storefronts will no longer be able to receive food supplies and distribute it to the Iraqi people.

● (2000)

Military action will immediately lead to the breakdown of water and transportation systems and cause a collapse in a food distribution system that is the lifeline for Iraqis. For a population that is already as vulnerable as Iraqis are today, this is certain to cause severe hardship.

If the United States and its allies were to use force without the authorization of the Security Council, in a manner that is generally considered unlawful, how would that serve the global community, not only in resolving the situation but, as we look to the future, other conflicts which undoubtedly would arise?

The consequences to the UN system may depend on whether the conflict is quick, therefore a small number of casualties, and as a result demonstrating that Iraq was, in fact, in the process of developing weapons of mass destruction, which indeed has been the Canadian standpoint all along. It is our intention to see weapons of mass destruction destroyed.

Such a revelation may enable the UN system to recover as there would be justification for the action having been taken. But of course we have no guarantee that this will be the case. We cannot count on the end justifying the means. It is of great concern to me that the conflict could easily spell the end of the UN system as we know it. We cannot compromise the integrity or the credibility of the United Nations in favour of unilateral action. There is too great a risk.

As our Prime Minister said recently, the United Nations can be a great force for good in the world and it is in all of our interests to use the power of international institutions in this very complex world.

In the spring of 1999 former president of the Czech Republic Vaclav Havel addressed the House of Commons. President Havel's remarkable leadership transformed his country from one of fear and oppression into a democratic republic. In his speech before the Canadian Parliament the president said that the role of governments, the rightful role of geopolitical bodies, is the protection of human rights. President Havel concluded his remarks with this statement:

...human rights are indivisible and that if injustice is done to some, it is done to all.

Clearly, we as Canadians must play a positive role in our turbulent world. Ultimately our values are not just being part of being Canadian but they are part of being part of humanity.

Kitchener-Waterloo is defined by a proud and diverse faith community, including the Mennonite Church. The Mennonite faith is based on a deep conviction that war does not present a substantive solution to any conflict. Reverend Mark Diller Harder shared his views on the crisis of Iraq with me recently. He said:

As a Mennonite people we pray for peace. We will work for peace. We call others to join us in building a world that provides peace and justice for all.

This is a sentiment that we share, regardless of our race or religion, and that is rooted in the common respect and love that we have for humanity.

Canada is extremely concerned about the human rights situation in Iraq. Canada has repeatedly condemned Iraq's human rights record. We have co-sponsored resolutions on human rights abuses in Iraq at the UN General Assembly and at the Human Rights Commission. Canadian officials have raised our concerns with Iraqi officials.

Since 1990, Canada has provided \$35 million in humanitarian assistance to the vulnerable people in Iraq and Iraqi refugees forced to flee to neighbouring countries. Canada has also participated in joint efforts to alleviate the impact of international sanctions on innocent Iraqi civilians.

Canadians are proud of our long standing tradition in foreign policy which has been to pursue and promote dialogue and understanding among the peoples of the world, and to seek political and diplomatic solutions, even in the face of imminent conflict. By continuing to act consistently with these values world peace and security will be enhanced and international institutions strengthened.

• (2005)

The rightful role of government is the protection of human rights. The United Nations provides an appropriate arena in which Canada can join our allies and ensure the protection and preservation of our freedom and world security.

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to speak in the debate on Iraq. I have had the opportunity to do that on a couple of other occasions. I know that it is always a difficult debate to take part in because there are so many factors, and I applaud all members who are taking part in this.

It is an interesting time right now. While I am speaking in the House, I am competing with the President of the United States on what he will be suggesting the action of the U.S. will be. I wonder how many people will be listening to me in comparison to that, and that includes my own party members. Nonetheless, I will do my best to put my thoughts on record because I think it is very important debate.

There are a few different factors. As I have said on past occasions, being the only Muslim in the House of Commons, I have concerns about taking action against dictators who need to have action against them for the freedom and democracy of individuals around the world. How that action is taken and what would amount from taking any form of action obviously concerns me.

This is one of those historical days that sometimes we wish that we do not have to live through. It is one of those days when world events overtake those everyday things that we take for granted. It seems like George Bush, in his opening comments just now, has given 48 hours to Saddam Hussein to leave Iraq. After that period, it seems that there will be some sort of action taken.

The entire world has been on pins and needles since President Bush named Saddam Hussein's Iraq as part of the axis of evil. President Bush made his intention clear on September 12 of last year that he wanted to remove the threat of Saddam. He went to the United Nations and asked for its support in disarming Iraq.

In November the world community responded overwhelmingly to his call and the Security Council adopted, as we all know, resolution 1441 with unanimity.

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We have watched as weapons inspectors have scurried to and fro in the Iraqi desert, hunting out weapons of mass destruction and, unfortunately, usually without any luck.

There was the destruction of the Al-Samoud missiles and there was the discovery of drones capable of spraying anthrax on unsuspecting civilians, but nowhere was there a smoking gun to be found, a shell filled with mustard gas, a rocket tipped with VX. That is not to say that through the process as well Saddam was not complying. There was some fear among all the allies, including the UN, that in fact Saddam was doing what he could to hide some of it.

The Iraqis and the French have said that this is proof that Iraq has disarmed. The British and the Americans have said that this is proof of Iraqi deception and non-compliance of resolution 1441.

We have watched positions harden. We have watched numerous failed attempts to broker a second resolution at the UN to authorize war. We have seen other countries put forward compromises, hoping to stave off war if only for a few more days. We have seen the intransigence of the French who have said they will veto all attempts at a compromise. We have watched numerous debates, at different levels, whether here or in other parts of the world.

In this House we have seen a few different reactions. Because of the Conservatives leadership race, we have seen some candidates saying no, that we should never be involved in action, while others have said that they think we should stand with the U.S. and bring on the invasion.

At least the members of the NDP have been somewhat consistent. It has been their position that Canada should never participate in war, even if the cause of war is just, a policy that was disproven at Munich but one that appeasers still today maintain.

The Bloc has maintained its position for UN involvement. Consistent, yes, but hardly realistic when we have an institution that relies upon the goodwill of countries like Libya which currently chairs the human rights arm of the UN.

The government has been the opposite of consistent. We have seen the defence minister saying one thing and the foreign affairs minister saying something entirely different. Then we have the Prime Minister making it up as he goes along. That is of course until today when he finally took a solid position.

It has been my party, the Canadian Alliance, that Canadians have had to look to for leadership on this issue.

• (2010)

It is not an easy thing to say right from the get-go that we have to stand with our allies even though we have to work through the UN process. However there has to be a united front against dictators like Saddam Hussein. While we have taken a position that may not have been popular, it is a position that we firmly believe is right.

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When we say the world would be better off without weapons of mass destruction, it is because we believe that and not because it is popular. When we say that dictators like Saddam Hussein are criminals, it is because we believe that is right. When we say that we have to support our allies, it is because we believe that despite our differences with the American government, we believe democracies must stick together.

This is the bond of democracy. It is a love of freedom and a real wish for all of the world's citizens to live in peace. The Canadian Alliance firmly believes this. We do not equivocate like our government. We do not depend on how the wind is blowing, especially when it comes to popular opinion on the issue.

Now the question becomes this. If we treasure the lives of people, how can we support a war? I want to make it clear that we never did support nor do we still support an open-ended senseless war. That is not done in the interests of the world community. We have always said that peace is preferable and Saddam should disarm.

We know that peace is not the absence of conflict and to be frank, Iraq has been in a constant state of conflict since Saddam became president. The sanctions are killing more children and civilians in a single year than what allied bombing did during the 1991 gulf war. Saddam arrests, tortures and kills those who oppose him and those who stand up for freedom in his own country.

It is absolutely a falsehood to say that Iraq is not embroiled in a conflict. Is it not incumbent on us, the privileged few in Canada and other countries, to stand up for Iraqi civilians and say enough is enough?

With that question being put, I think back to my family's own experience. I was only a toddler at the time when we came to Canada. When we came here, it was under similar circumstances of being persecuted in Uganda. My family fled a radical dictator similar to that of Saddam Hussein in Idi Amin of Uganda where our choice was clear. We had to leave the country and everything we had behind or face death.

At that time I remember there was some decision as to whether the UN or anyone should be involved with any conflict, and no action was taken. However countries like Great Britain, some European countries, the United States and of course Canada opened up their doors to many refugees fleeing from there, and that was a great thing.

I know as a Muslim growing up in Canada that I was able to become a part of the community and the culture. However we all know that there are many challenges that people face coming from other countries. In this place we represent people from all parts of the world and all different communities and cultures. The one thing my father always stressed to me, and I sometimes think was the reason why I ended up in this place, was how important freedom and democracy were and how we could not take that for granted.

As successful as we were in East Africa, as my family had businesses and we had communities that shared successes of a similar sort, we were not involved with the process of government and we were not involved in putting checks on people like Idi Amin who came into power. Having that influence from such a young age, from a person like my father who lost everything in coming to this

great country, really left a huge imprint on my mind as I was growing up.

It is no surprise that after getting involved in the process of democracy to the point where I have ended up in this place, I speak quite passionately about getting involved in places where we can deter some of the hardships that my own family and others felt in Uganda. What can we do in a proactive way to try to bring freedom and democracy around the world?

I have heard it also being put that we cannot democratize some of these Muslim countries because their religion and their beliefs are not compatible with democracy. It is completely abominable that people believe that. We have seen the history of some of these countries that have had unfortunate dictatorships, even though they have been in the guise of democracy. Iraq is one of those examples. Unfortunately there are dictators who hijack their own form of democracy and institute a form of democracy that is not compatible with the democracies we see in the western world.

● (2015)

This is why, if we want democracies to work and we want many of these countries to be a part of the large nation in respect for human rights for women and for various cultural groups and religious beliefs, all these different diversities that exist in Muslim countries as well, we have a responsibility as wider nations of the world to try to put pressure on people like Saddam Hussein to comply with standards that we all accept will even help to improve their own country's situation.

One of the concerns also with what may happen in the next few days in the Middle East, is how war will affect the Middle East and what sort of instability it will bring in the short term and if any war does take place, how we can hopefully set up some democratic systems and governing procedures that will institute a proper democracy in the interests of the people of Iraq.

For instance, Saudi Arabia is one of the countries we feel, and many people have said, that if there is war in Iraq it could create instability. We have seen the history there and we have seen that Saudi Arabia has in fact previously been threatened by Saddam. He has fired scud missiles into that country. Unfortunately, because of that there is a real balance of power, even among the Muslim countries, to try to guard themselves from any imminent attack.

With any movement into Iraq, we must obviously start thinking. Mr. Bush has given Saddam Hussein 48 hours to leave in exile. Any action that the Americans may take, we would hope that this government would be involved in a post-war scenario in helping to set up the new government located there and in helping to set up the principles of democracy that would be long standing and would hopefully stand in the interests of Iraqis. That is where we have a real opportunity. Now that the government said we will not be involved in any military action, we should really focus on the post-Iraq scenario, and I will talk a little bit about that later.

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Iran has also been put in as part of this axis of evil. We have seen that it is also in the process of developing nuclear weapons. In this country we know the civilian government is one that is a bit more open and we can take this opportunity to carve out a new, not so radical path for Iran. We can have a positive influence in trying to set up a long term democratic regime. However it has to take some stand in principle on behalf of countries like Canada to work with our allies to do so, especially in a post-war scenario.

I want to go on to talk about how we can take part as well in the next while, regardless of what may happen in Iraq or in the Middle East, in the peace process and just to highlight some of the successes and failures to date, because it is all linked together in trying to bring stability into that area.

The positive steps taken after the 1991 gulf war, such as the Oslo accord, were things in which many people were involved. The hope was that peace and security would be brought to the region. No one can argue that the American involvement in the Middle East in this time was crucial and key to the success of it.

Now, as we look forward, especially since we recently heard the British proposal for the road map for peace, I think it is clear that removing Saddam from creating instability in the area may actually make this more attainable. It will also help to create a level of security as well for Israel, which we are trying to do on both sides, whether its Palestine or Israel.

The subsequent breakdown of peace over the last while obviously has links to Iraq. Some people may deny that but we had some information that Saddam was paying terrorists and suicide bombers to go ahead with their plan of action and kill innocent civilians. The peace process has been paralyzed for over three years because of many of the actions related to Iraq.

This is a great opportunity, as I mentioned, with Great Britain going to the Security Council for a new resolution to lay out the road map for peace. After this whole situation developed, many people have questioned the effectiveness of the UN and how effective it will be in the future when it comes to deliberations on countries in military action because clearly there are different interests at stake.

● (2020)

It is unfortunate that we are reaching a point in history where the credibility of that institution, which could have a huge and tremendous effect around the world, is going to be questioned.

As we get into this process again of how and what is going to be happening, I would like to highlight some of the situations, as I have said in the past, with Saddam's crime against humanity and non-compliance.

Saddam Hussein previously ordered the use of chemical agents against Iran during the 10 year conflict and against the Kurdish people in the north. Over 1.5 million people died during the Iran-Iraq conflict. The invasion of Kuwait in 1990 was illegal under international law. Atrocities and crimes committed by Iraq during its occupation have been well documented, including murder, torture, the pillaging of Kuwaiti households and national treasures, and the destruction of Kuwaiti oil wells which led to massive environmental catastrophes, as well as obviously the scud attacks against Israel during the gulf war. We have now seen that Saddam

has no hesitation in attacking people around him and often without any provocation.

Following the gulf war, Iraq agreed to disarm and allow UN weapons inspectors to destroy chemical weapons. However, in 1998 weapons inspectors left because of Iraqi non-compliance with these UN resolutions. The oil for food program established to allow Iraqi citizens to avoid the brunt of Saddam's actions has been circumvented also by the Iraqi regime. There has been a clear non-compliance of resolution 1441.

Chief inspector Blix reported to the UN Security Council on January 27 numerous breaches by Iraq, thereby failing to fulfill its obligations under resolution 1441. Iraq was obligated to declare all of the chemical weapons and all devices but in fact it has not. The 12,000-plus page report had glaring omissions, especially with regard to nerve gas, anthrax, and chemical bombs and warheads. Iraq was supposed to grant unfettered access to all weapons sites. Access has been granted to sites but no effort has been made on Iraq's part to make these inspections easier at those sites. We have seen that right up until today.

Complying with the letter of the law but not the spirit has really been the mandate the Iraqi regime has been following. Canada's response to Iraqi non-compliance has been mixed at best. Canada has, and rightly so, acted with the United Nations when it comes to the issues of dealing with Iraqi non-compliance and we think that has been a good thing.

Canada supported the UN multilateral action in the 1990-91 action to prevent Saddam from holding on to Kuwait. Canada has supported every UN resolution adopted in the past decade, from sanctions to establishing the oil for food program and now to resolution 1441.

Canada also supported Operation Desert Fox in 1998 when Saddam refused to co-operate with weapons inspectors. This is an important point because this did not have UN approval, yet the House, from what I have heard some of my colleagues say today, did have an open debate and the House did take a vote so that all members could have a say.

Even though we finally see a position from the government today, there still has not been that commitment to democracy that many members in the House would like to see in order to have a final say as to what we believe should be done in this particular case. The government, when in opposition, had the right to do so. It is incredible that today, when it does have the chance to let all members have a say, it refuses that opportunity.

I would like to summarize what the Canadian Alliance has said in the past. We have questioned the effectiveness of sanctions. Something I was happy to see was when an all party committee actually agreed and there was unanimous consent to ease the sanctions, I believe it was in 2000, to try to help the people of Iraq. We were on side with that because it is not clear what detrimental effects sanctions can have on the people on the ground.

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There have been a number of other fronts with which we have been involved. I know my time is limited, so I would like to simply leave off by saying that in the next little while, as we know, unless Saddam does decide to leave Iraq in exile, we are faced with military action. Seeing that the government is not going to be involved, we must start to work toward the post-war scenario.

We should hope that the conclusion of any war will be fast. Canada should be making plans now with the UN, the U.S. and our allies for post-conflict restructuring of Iraq. The focus should be democratic reforms, inclusive of all ethnic groups and committed to peaceful relations with its neighbours and the world.

● (2025)

Canada could have a long term positive effect in developing that strategy and that is where we should be focusing. I hope that our credibility will not be affected with our allies because of this decision by the government.

Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan (York North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past number of months a deeply troubled global community has watched the American government as it has fanned the flames of war against Iraq. As I was heading into the chamber tonight we were delivered a cold and brutal truth that now the President of the United States has given his final 48 hour ultimatum.

The Bush administration has tried unsuccessfully to justify this war against Iraq. Individuals, communities and nations have rejected the American claims that Iraq presents a security threat to the rest of the world. None of these individuals or nations support the brutality of Saddam Hussein's regime, but none support the idea that a war for regime change is legitimate.

I forgot to mention, Mr. Speaker, that I will be sharing my time with the member for Algoma—Manitoulin.

The Bush administration says that this war against Iraq is part of an ongoing battle to fight terrorism. Yet many have clearly stated that an unjustified, illegitimate attack against Iraq, such as the one the American government has set the world on its course tonight, will only act to sow the seeds of terrorism wider and deeper. The idea that an American led war against Iraq would create a domino effect leading to peace and stability within the Middle East, an idea that has been put forward by the Bush administration, is a foolhardy notion. The critics of this notion are many. Indeed the critics of this peace domino effect exist within the American government itself. Many see that an American led attack against Iraq would instead result in huge instabilities and chaos in the region.

We are told that President Bush is a deeply religious man, and as we know, it is indeed a dangerous and volatile cocktail when religion and politics are mixed. We must ask ourselves why a deeply religious man refuses to listen to the pleas from the world's religious leaders and the prayers of millions of protesters across the planet, including the prayers that come from the lips of American citizens.

This push for war defies all reasoned, logical thinking and now it is with petulance and impatience that Bush informs the rest of the world that the moment of truth, his deadline, has been reached. Impatience is the key image that we should hold in our mind's eye of this man and his government, the tapping of the impatient American war boot as the soldiers wait for the final call to war; the impatient

tapping of the pen on the desk of the American generals as they await this final call from the president; the impatient tapping of the war correspondents' fingers on empty laptops as they wait for the rush of horror and gore to fuel their words.

What of the Iraqi people, the innocent men, women and children? What are their innermost feelings, their thoughts, their terrors as they await this impending carnage?

As an associate member of the foreign affairs committee, I have attended meetings to hear expert testimony on the Iraqi situation. We heard moving and very chilling testimony from a number of humanitarian relief organizations, groups and individuals who have spent many years working with Iraqi people. They know about the daily hardships these people face.

Sixteen million people depend on food distribution systems that will be grossly disrupted once hostilities commence. Iraq is a desert country and people need the electrical system to deliver water. If the electrical grid is damaged, people will be without clean, potable water. People are already badly nourished and suffering from diseases and medical conditions that would easily be treated in western hospitals. Many exist in a weakened state and it will be very difficult for them to survive more hardships.

The Iraqi children are particularly vulnerable. Many are malnourished and face starvation. The psychological effects of the terror of the impending war will scar these children deeply and forever. War Child, an NGO that works with war affected children, conducted a survey among Iraqi children last fall. It found that 40% did not think life was worth living. Children as young as five years old were interviewed.

Currently, Canadian humanitarian and relief organizations do not have the capacity to deal with the aftermath of this American led war against Iraq. The Canadian government needs to provide resources now in order to help the humanitarian relief organizations do the very difficult work that they will have to soon do.

● (2030)

The government, through the leadership of the Prime Minister, has taken a very important first step in making a clear and unequivocal statement. As the Prime Minister said today in the House, "Canada will not participate in a war with Iraq without a new resolution from the Security Council". The Prime Minister knows the course of action the Americans are inextricably bound with is unjust and unacceptable.

The Prime Minister has been able to successfully untangle Canadian foreign policy from that of the hyperpower to the south of us. We are an independent and sovereign nation whose Prime Minister, in the words of Dalton Camp, "knows it is better to let his powder dry before opening fire", a counterpoint to the jingoistic, petulant impatience blatantly displayed by Mr. Bush. Today the Prime Minister said the words that Canadians want to hear, that we will not participate in this unjustified, illegitimate war. These are words of strength and courage.

The Quakers in my riding of York North organized a peace rally. I congratulate them for doing this and joining the millions of people around the globe who spoke out for peace. Unfortunately, Bush and his government have chosen to ignore this. The reality of this final ultimatum of 48 hours is shocking and the impact of the meaning of these words will take months, years, if not decades, to be fully understood.

What kind of domino effect is really going to be felt not only in the region but across the planet? I fear for the men, women and children of Iraq just as I fear for my own children's safety and security.

● (2035)

Mr. Brent St. Denis (Algoma—Manitoulin, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like all my colleagues who have spoken this evening and those who will follow, we have chance to speak in this place at a very challenging time for the world.

Just a few minutes ago Mr. Bush, the U.S. president, concluded an important address to not only his own citizens in the U.S., but to people around the world. In that address he basically gave Iraq's leadership 48 hours to decide its own fate. In this next 48 hours we will either see a conclusion of a march to war or, hopefully, a miracle. Lest we drown ourselves in wishful thinking, it appears all too obvious that the chance for a miracle is very remote.

Nonetheless, there will be millions of people around the world, including Canadians, who will be praying and hoping, and others who will be wringing their hands in the very limited possibility that Mr. Hussein will see that the only option it would appear to avoid war is for him to stand down.

As recently as yesterday I actually believed that it was possible to avoid war. However I am sure, like most members in this place, that hope has been severely diminished, but we will see.

I would like to remark, as my predecessor has, on the statement made by the Prime Minister today on behalf of all Canadians and the position, quite frankly, that will resonate with the vast majority, certainly of my constituents but of citizens across the land that we must at this time and in the future put our trust in the UN.

The Prime Minister said today that we believe Iraq must fully abide by the resolution of the United Nations Security Council. We have always made it clear that Canada requires the approval of the Security Council if we are to participate in a military campaign. Over the last few weeks the Security Council has been unable to agree on a new resolution authorizing military action.

Canada worked very hard to find a compromise to bridge the gap in the Security Council but unfortunately we were not successful. If military action proceeds without a new resolution of the Security Council, Canada will not participate.

I fully support the position taken by the Prime Minister. He has taken us through a very difficult time and these times will continue to be difficult. I have little doubt that while Canada's role in a military action will not be there, I do know that Canada's role in the following rebuilding of Iraq will be there. I take great solace in the fact that our Minister for International Cooperation just announced a quarter of a billion dollars to assist Afghanistan in its reconstruction,

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and I have little doubt that Canada's commitment to a post-war Iraq will be just as strong and just as serious.

My riding of Algoma—Manitoulin was once represented by the late right hon. Lester B. Pearson who, as members will know, left us a great legacy when it comes to peacekeeping and in his work to support the United Nations.

I believe that while the tragedy of a war and the loss of innocent human lives is the greatest tragedy, very close behind that will be the potential loss of whatever credibility the UN has earned itself over the past 50-plus years.

● (2040)

Some will argue that the UN is irrelevant and has always been irrelevant. Others will say, and I am in that camp, that the UN is still a work in progress and that every opportunity we have to build the UN indeed we should take.

This situation with respect to Iraq was one such occasion, an occasion where we as a world, including our neighbours to the south, should have taken as an opportunity to add some more bricks and mortar to the UN as a very important planetary institution. However, the world is a long way from being perfect and we know that.

My only hope is that this particular time period will not see the demise of the UN to a state from which it cannot recover. It will take a very serious body blow but I am confident that men and women of goodwill from all parts of the world will see that this recent time, if nothing else, should require us to bend our shoulder to the wheel and work harder to ensure that the United Nations in situations like this becomes a stronger player in the world.

I am one who believes that we can use worldwide institutions of governance more to bring about a more peaceful world, a world that is more fair for the poor, that is better for the environment and that is a place where the quality of life for everybody each year grows instead of the gap growing.

Where we have put so much confidence in the UN at different times only to have our confidence shattered, and on this day and quite possibly over the next two days have that hope shattered again, this is a time I think for the world, once the dust settles, to step back and rethink the structure of the United Nations and its ability to engage itself in the difficult challenges that face the world. Indeed, I think the very first step the United Nations will take, if the war is a short war, should it happen, is to shortly thereafter rebuild Iraq. Hopefully the world will see that it should never bring itself to this precipice again.

Like all my colleagues here, we had the chance to visit our ridings over the last couple of weeks. We heard much about the issues of the day and in particular the potential war in Iraq. My constituents, with some exceptions but in the great majority, indicated that they would want the United Nations support for our involvement.

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We are a nation of peacekeepers. I had a chance, as some of my colleagues have had, to spend a little bit of time in the military. I had the great honour to spend a week in Wainwright, Alberta, last August and then a week in Bosnia in November with the 1st battalion of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, a great program that the former minister of defence had a hand in developing. I had a chance to meet people in our army in particular but our military in general, who I am sure are the finest military people in the world. If we were to ask them about the way they would tell us that, at all cost, peace must be our first objective.

This is not a time for me or the House to condemn our neighbours to the south. They are our friends today and they will be our friends tomorrow, next week and next month. I think we are past picking apart the entrails of the chicken to determine how we got here and where we are going. Mr. Bush will answer to his own citizens and he will of course answer to the stories written about this time which will become part of the history of our planet. That will be as it will be.

The main thing for me is whether this time brings us closer to peace in the world in the long run or further apart? Being the eternal optimist, I would find, even in this difficult time, some consolation that there has been a galvanization in the world about such matters, and that men and women of goodwill will find the way, in the medium and long term, to bring peace to this planet.

• (2045)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise you that I will be sharing my time with the member for Rosemont. This speech tonight might be the most important speech I make in the House since being elected in 1993, because these are very troubled and tense times that the world is experiencing.

We know when a war starts, but not when it will end. It will no doubt start in about 48 hours, according to the ultimatum served earlier by President Bush to Saddam Hussein. Knowing Saddam Hussein's position, and given his reaction this afternoon, we can unfortunately predict there will be an armed conflict. Our job is to express our views, but we must not lose sight of what is important.

What is important, in my opinion, lies in the three notions of this debate that have divided international public opinion. But there are many more people who have taken one of the sides in this debate, and I believe that it is the minority that is imposing its will.

So there are three notions that we must consider. They are the legitimacy of this war, the legality of this war and the necessity of this war. Nowhere have these three notions been proven: not at the United Nations, not at the Security Council, not in worldwide public opinion, nor in the international community has anyone demonstrated that this war is legal, necessary or legitimate. Colin Powell has not managed to prove it, nor has Tony Blair. The same is true of the UN inspectors, who maintained their neutrality, despite the pressures they were subjected to. On the contrary, the UN inspectors had to acknowledge, ultimately, that the Iraqi regime was in fact cooperating with the whole process.

Therefore, we must question the current position, because if we cannot find plausible reasons, then everything is arbitrary. That is what I want to emphasize, because we must ask ourselves in good

conscience how this war is justified, how we can explain it. American leaders have so far failed when it comes to providing reasons that appear valid.

In this respect, several possible explanations have been put forward. Are the Americans motivated by the need for oil, and the fact that Iraq still has huge oil reserves, which could help protect American reserves? Is it to fight terrorism? But no link could be made officially or scientifically between the regime in Iraq and al-Qaeda. Could it be to usher in a new geopolitical order in the Middle East? If so, at what price? And, as everyone knows, there is direct connection with another very complex situation known as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Is it simply because the American leaders want to impose a presence and their power in the Middle East, in keeping with a concept that pervades the American culture and which is called the manifest destiny, that is their manifest destiny whereby they never stop expanding their hegemony?

Is it to push for Saddam Hussein's regime to be replaced? If so, where does it stop, as the Prime Minister of Canada pointed out? How far shall it go? Who will be next on the list of political leaders to be replaced?

Or is this—I hope this is not serious and that the idea put forward by some is unfounded—an elaborate diversion tactic to distract attention from the terrible scandals that have rocked the American economy in recent months? I think of Enron, WorldCom, Adelphia where, as we know, thousands of small investors have been cheated in their investments.

• (2050)

Thousands of jobs were lost. This, we know, shook the U.S. economy and affected mainly, in terms of their credibility, stock markets in the U.S..

I do hope that this is not true, but could this not be a huge diversionary tactic? American leaders are currently, I think, very isolated from the international community. Only two countries support the United States. They are now being condemned throughout the world by millions and millions of people.

The United States in particular, despite the media concentration we are familiar with, is being condemned by important figures in the international community. I am thinking of Nelson Mandela, who spoke in very harsh, virulent terms. I am thinking of the Vatican, which has said that if there is any military intervention in Iraq without UN approval, it will not be a war but aggression. Words are important in diplomacy. That is what the Vatican said. Jesse Jackson, the black leader, has taken a stand against the U.S. administration. Jimmy Carter, a former President of the United States, very courageously condemned his government's intention to take unilateral action, without UN approval.

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We must be clear. When we talk about having or not having UN approval, we must remember that the UN is the custodian of international law. When action is taken without UN approval, that action is illegal. The UN authorizes or prohibits war. It is not a detail, a secret or a whim. This organization gives the authorization. If a state does not follow UN law, it is a rogue state. That is exactly why the League of Nations was founded in the 1920s and the United Nations in 1948.

It would be a huge step backward for mankind and perhaps the first moments of a crisis that, unfortunately, could degenerate and have very negative, incommensurable consequences.

Because they have been so brutally attacked by the media in the U.S., I think that in this entire debate we should commend the countries of Europe. I am thinking especially of France, which has defended itself and put up a very courageous fight in this debate. It has demonstrated leadership and determination. It is perhaps because Europe—I am thinking about France, Germany, Belgium—consists of countries with people who have experienced the agonies of war and suffering. They know that we always know when a war begins, but not when it is going to end. That might be what is motivating the leaders of these countries in the courage they have had, despite threats of retaliation; it is no secret. They do not know the future, but despite these threats, they have stayed the course, which is peace, not war.

Based on what we know about the American strategy, there will be 3,000 bombs dropped in the first 48 hours, if all goes according to plan. However, 3,000 bombs in the first 48 hours will result in a massacre and carnage. Faced with such a situation, there is a clear risk that this will degenerate across the world and spread from continent to continent. In fact, specific groups of people—namely Arabs and Muslims—could very well feel targeted, attacked and humiliated. Where will this end?

Before I conclude I would like to express my sympathy for the Iraqi people who have been suffering since the gulf war in 1991 and under the embargo. Some 500,000 children have been affected. Some 200 children die each day because of the embargo imposed by the international community, which has been maintained—it seems—more arbitrarily than not, more often than not.

● (2055)

I would also like to commend the Canadian position. I think we are currently adopting the right position. We must not do indirectly what we do not want to do directly, that is maintain troops in the region to make it easier for other countries to fight against Iraq by taking their place in Afghanistan. I think we have to show true courage and openness.

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am of course pleased to have the opportunity to speak this evening, but distressed at the same time, since we find ourselves obliged to hold this debate that is so important, to say the least, for the future of Iraq and the future of our civilization as well. As my colleague from Trois-Rivières has already said, this is a very sombre evening.

Before I address the core issue, that is the potential of an intervention in Iraq, I would like to make it clear that, regardless of the positions we have to take this evening, I feel it is important to

stress the major impact the Saddam Hussein regime has had in recent years on the people of Iraq. A dictator who dares to use chemical warfare against his own people deserves to be denounced, in my opinion. The people of Iraq are a fragile population that has ended up with a dictatorial regime of which women and children, and of course men as well, have been the first victims.

Let us also remember that the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq have already had major consequences. According to UNICEF, two million children under the age of five have suffered and died since 1991. This represents 150 to 200 children a day who have fallen victim to the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq.

There was a dual factor involved: a regime that showed nothing but contempt for its own civilian population, and economic sanctions that hit the population first and foremost.

The conflict that is to come will have major consequences for civilian populations. Let us keep in mind that the last Gulf War in 1991 left between 100,000 and 200,000 Iraqi civilians dead. Civilian populations are, of course, the first ones to be affected.

It seems to me that it is important to put the situation in context in this evening's debate, that is the fact that the civilian populations are the first ones affected, regardless of whether or not there is an "oil for food" program. It may prevent famine, but it does not improve conditions for the people of Iraq, not by a long shot. These realities must be kept in mind throughout the debate.

The Bloc Québécois feels that the objective of international policy toward Iraq must be compliance with the United Nations resolutions and a peaceful resolution to the conflict. We believe in resolution 1441; all nations of the world believe in it. But the speech this evening by the President of the United States forces us to acknowledge that our interpretations of this resolution differ.

We believe that the basis of the resolution that was adopted in November 2002 is disarmament, of course, but peaceful disarmament. It is aimed at achieving disarmament not by force as the President of the United States would have us believe tonight, but first through diplomatic means, through peaceful means.

● (2100)

That is what we are repeating tonight, what we believe in. We believe that such disarmament must be achieved by the international community and by the Security Council. We believe that inspectors must be given enough time to do their job. We also believe that the speech tonight by the President of the United States makes a mockery of the international community. Even though the United States has the support of Great Britain and Spain, let us not forget that the people of these countries are opposed to military action without the approval of the Security Council, the proportion being over 80% in the case of Spain and even greater in the case of Great Britain.

We believe that the democratic principle of respect for the people must apply in this case and that any talk of war makes a mockery of the international community.

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I will give as an example the report presented to the Security Council on March 7 by the UN inspectors, which says that the inspection process, under the able direction of Hans Blix, is bearing fruit. As of March 17, 72 Al-Samoud missiles have been destroyed, which represents about half of the total number of missiles that Iraq possesses. Inspectors must be given more time because the process is working, because we are achieving results and because these results are continuing.

Dr. El Baradei, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said that there was no evidence that Iraq had resumed a nuclear program. Nor did there exist any evidence that Iraq was trying to import uranium. Is this not proof that the current process is working well? No, the Americans have refused to accept the UN report and they are trying to impose their war logic on the international community.

What is this logic based on? It is based on a supposed link between al-Qaeda and Iraq, a supposed proof that Iraq is said to possess weapons of mass destruction. Again, Hans Blix said that there was no real evidence that Iraq has resumed its nuclear program, no evidence that Iraq was in possession of weapons of mass destruction.

So, is there a link between Iraq and al-Qaeda? On February 2, 2003, *The New York Times* quoted a U.S. government official who said, "We've been looking at this hard for more than a year and you know what, we just don't think it's there".

So, there is no evidence that the nuclear program has resumed, no evidence that Iraq is currently in possession of weapons of mass destruction and no evidence of a link between al-Qaeda and Iraq.

Canada's position may well be clear tonight, but the government must do more. It must reiterate the fact that it will not, either directly or indirectly, take part in an intervention in Iraq. We know that we currently have three ships in the Gulf.

•(2105)

What we want from the government tonight is for it to make a solemn commitment to withdrawing the three ships. What we are asking of this government is that it not use the pretext of an essential fight against terrorism to maintain its presence in the Persian Gulf.

More than 3,000 people in my riding are against an intervention in Iraq. Today, I represent these 3,000 citizens. I want to repeat that I will never, ever, support Canada's participation in a possible attack or intervention against Iraq, given the current evidence.

[English]

Hon. Art Eggleton (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Cambridge.

Approximately an hour ago President Bush gave a 48 hour ultimatum to Saddam Hussein and his regime. Do we not all wish that he would take him up on that and that he would depart Iraq. He is a brutal dictator and certainly the Iraqi people would be much better off without him. But I do not think that will be a great possibility, as much as it would be wished.

The next step the president intends to take is one that involves military action. I believe that is a mistake. I believe that the inspection regime was producing results. Yes, we must all admit that

to a great degree it was because of the very pressure President Bush brought to bear on the Iraqi regime, but that does not justify taking it to the next step of war because, as Mr. Blix has said, progress is being made. More time is needed by him and the inspectors. There can be containment of the situation by the United Nations.

Indeed, the agenda of the United Nations is one of disarmament. That is not the agenda of President Bush. He has made it clear that it is one of regime change. He has said that right from the beginning. The United Nations believes there is not a clear and present danger to the world or to the United States from Iraq and that inspections should be allowed to carry on.

The position that was put forward today in the House by the Prime Minister is the correct position. It is one where we will not become involved in the conflict in Iraq because it does not have the sanction of the Security Council. We must be a part of and support the United Nations and its Security Council process. Yes, there are imperfections. Yes, there is a need for a lot of reform in that system. But it is the one international forum we have to try and maintain peace in the world and I think we must respect that forum.

Mr. Bush tonight said that it had failed to act and he indicated his disappointment in the Security Council. I do not believe we should allow him to attack the credibility of the United Nations because he did not get his way, because there are many countries that simply do not agree with the next step that he wants to take. Canada will continue to support the United Nations and the Security Council process, and that is what I believe most Canadians would want Canada to do.

At the same time, we must recognize that we are the closest friends of the people of the United States. We are tied very closely economically to the United States. Our neighbours have gone through a very traumatic experience with the attacks of September 11. We must be careful in dealing with our friend and ally that we bear that in mind as we go through the troubled times ahead.

Some mention was made of the legality of going into this conflict, whether resolution 1441 in fact does provide, as the president has indicated, the sufficient justification to proceed with conflict, with a military attack. I think lawyers will argue for a considerable amount of time whether in fact it is legal. Meanwhile, whether it is or is not, regardless what the lawyers may say, a military action is about to occur.

Canadian troops were mentioned today in the House. I do not believe that any Canadian troops should be a part of any action in Iraq. If we are not participating in that war, our troops should neither be involved in direct combat nor in a support operation where the maple leaf is on their shoulder and they are participating in any way in the Iraq conflict.

There are other roles which they could play with the United States, Britain or our other allies around the world, that may well not come within that category, and there is nothing wrong with that.

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• (2110)

Nor is it wrong for our troops to be involved in the war against terrorism. Indeed the campaign against terrorism is one that we have thoroughly supported. We are involved again in sending troops to Afghanistan and that region as part of the effort to bring about greater stability in that country. Our Canadian troops should not be part of the conflict in Iraq.

There is also the question of a humanitarian disaster which is looming for the people of Iraq, the innocent civilians of Iraq. Half of the people of that country, some 60 million people, depend upon the government for food supplies and half of them in turn are children. There are many children that are undernourished, many children that are already going without clean water. Disease is already a factor in their lives. How much worse is it going to be when the conflict begins?

Unfortunately the United States and the other countries that are involved in the conflict have not put enough time and attention into how they are going to relieve that kind of pain for the very people the President of the United States said tonight he was not attacking. He wants to help them. He wants to liberate them. Hopefully he and his country will be able to do more to help relieve the pain that might result from any attack.

It is not going to be the people who become, in the jargon of war, collateral damage. It is the people who will suffer from starvation, disease and other factors that are going to be part of this humanitarian catastrophe.

There is also the risk of instability in the entire region. There must be great caution in terms of not inciting the potential for a clash of civilizations, Muslim versus the west. Nobody wants that. When we get into war, when we get into this kind of conflict and the kind of instability that could be created in that entire region, there are always risks that have to be watched. Hopefully as any military action progresses, the world community through the United Nations will keep an eye on the situation to help ensure that this war, this conflict does not spread beyond what the President of the United States says he wants to accomplish in terms of regime change.

Post-war governance again will be an issue that will require a lot of attention. It is probable that there will be a military governor from the United States who will be in Iraq for some period of time. We do not know what length of time that might be, but again that can cause a lot of anxiousness, a lot of resentment for many other people, not only in Iraq but people in the surrounding areas. We only hope that out of all of this, if there is going to be war we end up seeing the people relieved of so much pain they have been through and that we end up moving toward the kind of democratic institutions that I believe they deserve.

It would have been better to go the other route. It would have been better to contain the conflict. In fact the more clear and present danger probably comes from North Korea. The President of the United States says that we can solve that by diplomatic means, but somehow we cannot solve this by diplomatic means. I believe that he is making a mistake in the plan that he is about to unleash.

One can only hope that if this is going to happen, that it be mercifully short. I think there is a very high risk of it being quite

dangerous, quite messy and a high risk of it going on for some period of time, a high risk in it spreading beyond where the President of the United States thinks its limits are.

One of the lessons of history is that wars do not very often go according to plan. They become something far different than we had ever imagined. We only hope and pray that will not happen in this case and perhaps in these last moments somehow war will totally be avoided.

• (2115)

Mr. Janko Peric (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to once again put on the record my views with respect to Canadian intervention in Iraq.

I cannot in all honesty believe that this evening the world is on the brink of another war. What makes the situation that much more difficult to understand is that we have been brought to this brink by none other than two of our closest allies, the leaders of the United States of America and Great Britain.

The leaders of those two great democracies in the world have decided to say to hell with the United Nations and international diplomacy, to hell with the millions of people around the world who have pleaded with their governments to resolve their differences with Iraq by peaceful means. No, our two greatest allies have decided they are too far down the road to war that they cannot turn back and they do not need a resolution from the United Nations to authorize them to invade another nation.

All I can say is what absolute nonsense. Our neighbours and friends are being led into a war by a leader who believes he has something to prove, to whom I am not certain, but he is prepared to isolate his nation from the international community, united against war with an already weakened nation.

Yes, Hussein is a dangerous man. No doubt Iraq is in possession of weapons it should not have, chemical and otherwise. I said no doubt because there has been documented evidence that the U.S. provided Iraq with such weapons back when it considered Saddam Hussein a friend, but he is no longer considered a friend.

Even weapons inspectors have been making inroads in Iraq over the past few weeks. Iraqis have been cooperating with weapons inspectors. Missiles found to be non-compliant have been and continue to be destroyed, but none of this is good enough for President George Bush. President George Bush will not rest until he has defeated Saddam, until he has finished the job his father did not finish in 1991. For this the world has been thrown into uncertainty.

I am terribly concerned about the precedent this unilateral action by the U.S. and Britain is setting. U.S. President George Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair have decided that they are not required to abide by international law, that they are above the law. God forbid that anyone should disagree with them, because in their minds their actions are justified. They can go in and overrun a nation and those of us who do not agree with them are wrong and unreasonable.

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As far as I can see the only parties being unreasonable in this entire situation are President Bush and Prime Minister Blair. They are the ones who have appeared unwilling to compromise. They are the ones who are showing absolute disregard for the concerns of their friends and neighbours around the globe. I am sorry if our neighbours to the south do not like what has been said here tonight, but if we are true friends, we must not be afraid to tell it like it is.

What happens if, after the U.S. and Britain have completely destroyed Iraq, they succeed in removing Saddam Hussein? Will they install yet another so-called puppet, as was once the case when Saddam and other known U.S. friends turned enemies, like Osama bin Laden and Slobodan Milosevic? Will the U.S. then decide to go to war against the new Iraqi leader in a few years when the leader decides he no longer wants to abide by its orders? Perhaps there is another rogue leader somewhere in the world that will be the next target. When will this ever end?

● (2120)

My constituents have been consistent in their position on Canada's intervention in Iraq. Canada should not participate in any military action against Iraq or anyone else without authorization from the United Nations.

This government has listened. The Prime Minister's announcement today that Canada will not participate unless there is a new resolution from the United Nations Security Council is welcome news to my constituents and to me personally. The Prime Minister and Canadian diplomats at the United Nations have worked tirelessly to reach a compromise between those with opposed views on this matter but it is hard to reach a compromise when there appears to be so little will to do so.

There are some in the House who believe we should support efforts of our American neighbours just because they are our neighbours and because we share a common border. I am afraid that I do not buy this argument. If my friend was about to commit a crime or do something that was morally wrong, I could not stand by that friend no matter how much he or she meant to me personally. In fact I would not support a family member if that person's actions were illegal or immoral, so how could I possibly support the actions of the United States and its British partner when they are about to act illegally?

Simply put, I cannot support them and will not support them unless the United Nations sanctions their actions by way of a UN Security Council resolution. I applaud the Prime Minister for making our nation's position on this matter very clear.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be speaking in this debate tonight. Of course I am not happy about the circumstances of this debate. I think it is clear that the reason for it is that the members of the House anticipated that the United States and its coalition of allies, roughly 30 countries, would come to a decision to go to war in Iraq should Saddam Hussein refuse to back down and to respect the United Nations resolution. It has become pretty clear that simply will not happen and the anticipation on the part of the members has led to this debate here today.

I would like to start by asking this question. Is there one member of Parliament in the House, either from the government's side or

from the opposition's side, who wants war? I think the answer is clear: no. I doubt that there is one member of Parliament in the House of Commons who wants war. That is not the issue.

There are a couple of important issues that have to be considered seriously. First, starting from the base that not one member of Parliament wants war, then what could Canada do to best help avoid war? Second, is there a time when war is a preferable option to taking no action and ending up with a much worse situation down the road, even worse than war? I think those are the two questions that have to be debated, talked about and considered very seriously tonight.

How can we best avoid war? We are to a point now where it is very clear that is highly unlikely. It is entirely in the hands of Saddam Hussein and maybe a few people in his immediate surrounding environment. Should Saddam decide to leave Iraq, war could be avoided. Should Saddam be killed by someone in Iraq, then perhaps war could be avoided. It is only those circumstances realistically right now that could cause war to be avoided.

It is important that we look at what should have been done. I do not think there is anybody here in the House who believes this will be the last very difficult situation that will have to be dealt with by the United Nations, by our allies and by the NATO alliance. I do not think any of us think this will be the last very difficult situation with which we will have to deal. It is important to learn from what has and has not happened in dealing with this situation.

How could war most likely have been avoided in Iraq? The answer is twofold. First, the United Nations could have backed up its resolutions at a much earlier stage than now. Second, Canada, along with our allies, could have provided a much stronger, unified deterrent on the borders of Iraq to send the message to Saddam Hussein in the only language he understands that in fact he must comply with the United Nations resolution.

What does that mean Canada should have done? The official opposition called for Canada last October to be a part of a broad coalition to send military personnel to the area of Iraq, not to declare war but to be a part of a unified force to provide that strong deterrent to Saddam Hussein. Quite frankly, we have learned over the past at least 12 years that the only language Saddam Hussein understands is the language of a very real threat of force.

Last October, did the Prime Minister join with our allies to provide part of that deterrent, to put Canada's name on that list of unified nations that would stand and enforce the UN resolutions against Iraq and against Saddam Hussein? Canada chose not to. I suggest that by not taking that action, Canada has not done its part in trying, in a very real way, to help prevent this war from ever happening.

● (2125)

It worked twice before with Saddam Hussein. In 1995, four short years after the gulf war, Saddam Hussein amassed troops on the border of Kuwait once again to invade Kuwait for a second time in four years. What prevented him from doing that? It was the amassing of a large number of American troops on the border. Only when Saddam saw the American troops, did he know that if he attempted to invade there would be consequences. Only then did he back down.

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The second occasion where that show of force proved to be very effective against Saddam Hussein was last year when American troops along with British troops amassed on the border of Iraq once again, and only then did Saddam Hussein agree to allow weapons inspectors back into his country. It was only with that very real and present threat of force.

It worked twice before. Most of the world has come to realize that is the only way of delivering a message that Saddam Hussein really understands.

Last weekend the Prime Minister made a very important and interesting point. He said that the deterrent effect provided by the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and a growing coalition of about 30 countries, that very real show of force on the border, had practically won the war already. He said that it certainly caused Saddam Hussein to co-operate at least to some degree with weapons inspectors.

I have seldom heard a leader of any free nation in the world make a more stupid statement than the Prime Minister made when he said that the war was practically won. I do not believe that for a minute. I believe this could be an extremely difficult war, not only for the allies but certainly for many Iraqi people. It was an unbelievable statement made by our Prime Minister.

I want to focus a bit on the other point.

The Prime Minister said that the show of force provided a very useful, important and effective deterrent to Saddam Hussein. We would have to assume then that Canada would be a part of that deterrent force. It makes sense. If the Prime Minister could see that this was effective, surely he would know that from the two times before, in 1995 and last year, when a show of force proved to be the only thing Saddam understood. It was proven to be effective.

The Prime Minister knew this show of force was effective. Was Canada involved then? No. He chose to take no action. He did not join with our allies and help provide that deterrent force, not to invade Iraq but to send a unified message. Instead we have had anything but unity from the United Nations and from the world. Saddam Hussein sees wiggle room and he has taken it.

I believe that is why we are where we are today. No one has taken a stand. The world has not united to take a strong stand against Saddam Hussein. For the Prime Minister to recognize the effect and the benefit of this deterrent and not be involved in it, is something for which he has to answer to Canadians. It is not acceptable leadership from this government.

● (2130)

I have heard many people say that there are those who think that Canada should go to war if the United States or Great Britain does. I disagree. I do not believe Canada should go to war because our allies choose war. I do not think that is the right reason and I do not believe that is what Canada should do.

Canada should choose war only when choosing to avoid war will lead to a less desirable outcome. Let us look at the reality of what has happened in Iraq when trying to determine if that is the situation because I think clearly that is the situation here.

There are many who say we must let diplomacy run its course. How many years should we try to depend only on words to win against Saddam Hussein? How many years? Some say certainly a year; and two years is not too much to ask. If it takes five years, maybe we should take five years.

It has been 12 years that the world, and the United Nations in leading this effort, has applied words, diplomacy, to try to force Saddam Hussein to destroy his weapons of mass destruction.

Let us keep in mind what we are talking about here. It is to disarm Saddam Hussein and to eliminate the weapons of mass destruction which could easily be delivered by any number of terrorist groups who would be too happy to deliver them on behalf of Saddam Hussein. The goal is to disarm and to ensure that these weapons of mass destruction will not be used against Canada, the United States, neighbouring countries or the Iraqi people. That is the objective.

The question is, how do we do that most effectively? We tried 12 years ago starting with the ceasefire resolution 687. Under that resolution Saddam Hussein agreed 12 years ago that he would turn over weapons of mass destruction to UN weapons inspectors. Can we afford to wait another 12 years?

I think there is no doubt that waiting another 12 years would do two things. First, it would allow Saddam Hussein to build even more dangerous weapons of mass destruction and have someone deliver these weapons on his behalf. Second, more time and another 12 years is not a realistic solution at all in this case.

I wanted to ask a couple of questions about the leadership of this country. Has the government provided effective leadership on this issue? I would argue that the Liberal government has never shown leadership on the question of a potential war in Iraq. It is clear that today's decision was taken for pure political considerations. What do I mean by that? It is the easy position for the government to take. That does not make it the right decision, but it is the easiest decision for the government to make under these circumstances, right now. That is the major contributing reason.

In the first major international crisis of the century, the Canadian government has chosen not to support its closest allies. In fact, we have seen one after another, government members in the House and some opposition members poking our closest friend and ally in the eye. It is not enough to take a different position and certainly at times we take different positions. That is fair enough, but they poked them in the eye and made statements like "the United States is more dangerous to world peace than Saddam Hussein and Iraq". We have heard that again and again from the governing party and from members of the opposition. I believe that type of statement is completely unacceptable.

● (2135)

In fact, we must recognize that while we may have differences of opinion in how we deal with a situation, that type of treatment of a good friend and neighbour is simply not acceptable and I will be no part of that, nor will my party or anyone in my party.

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Looking at the government leadership, the Liberals have flip-flopped on their earlier declared position regarding resolution 1441. We saw, just a short time ago in the House, the government say clearly that resolution 1441, which was passed unanimously by the United Nations Security Council, did provide everything that was necessary to authorize the use of force in the case of Iraqi non-compliance. That is what the government supported just a couple of months ago here in the House.

What does the Prime Minister say over the past week or two? He says that is no longer good enough, we need another UN resolution to be passed before we can legitimize the use of force against Iraq for complete non-compliance on the part of Saddam Hussein.

Anyone who has any doubt that Saddam Hussein is not complying with the weapons inspectors just has to look at the Blix reports carefully and honestly. He has made statements very clearly in his reports that Saddam Hussein has not sufficiently supported and complied with resolution 1441. He has made that very clear, yet we have the government flip-flopping on this very important issue.

I would now like to deal with the last action on the part of the government, today's usual money position on the issue. Its position today was saying that it politically would not support using force to disarm Saddam Hussein, but it may commit troops to help with disarming Saddam Hussein when it comes to weapons of mass destruction. I want to talk a little about that. I think it is something Canadians should have a look at.

The Prime Minister on the one hand takes the position that politically we cannot support force to disarm Saddam Hussein, yet let us look at the reality of what Canada is doing in the area of Iraq right now.

I proudly say that Canada is involved in Operation Apollo and has been for the last couple of years. Operation Apollo is an extremely important mission in the war against terrorism. Canada is involved in interdiction of ships which may be carrying illegal goods into Iraq or may be carrying illegal goods, such as weapons of mass destruction, out of Iraq. It is dangerous and difficult work, and Canadian military personnel have performed wonderfully in carrying out that work. They have become known as some of the best in the world at boarding ships and carrying out this interdiction work. They do it with equipment that is completely inadequate by anybody's judgment, including government members.

Canada is involved and Operation Apollo very interestingly has been moving across the Persian Gulf closer and closer to Iraq every week. So, can we argue that Canada's involvement in Operation Apollo is not an involvement in the war in Iraq? I think it may be a difficult issue to argue.

Let us go a little farther than that. Let us look at the Canadian contingent in Qatar. Some time back, more than a year ago, Canada had agreed to put a contingent of Canadian military personnel in Qatar. Now Qatar, as we know, is the American main base of operations for Iraq. Are these military personnel involved in the war with Iraq? It is unclear when they are operating from the same country that houses the main American base in amassing military might on the border of Iraq and we have Canadian troops there.

We have Canadian troops working with our allies in joint missions. They are on exchange programs. I do not know exactly how many. It could be somewhere over a hundred.

• (2140)

The Prime Minister made the decision on behalf of Canadians that morally it is right to put these Canadian military lives on the line to help win the war in Iraq, if we should go to war, to help disarm Saddam Hussein. I would like to know how the Prime Minister could argue that morally it is not right for Canada to send a larger contingent and provide a larger effort to help disarm this heinous dictator, Saddam Hussein? That is the question I would like the Prime Minister to answer at his earliest opportunity.

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

Let me begin by reading some words, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breath free". Those words are engraved on the base of the Statue of Liberty in the United States, in New York harbour. I will focus my remarks on that famous monument because I think the Statue of Liberty is central to what is happening here with respect to the Americans wanting to invade Iraq, to rescue the Iraqis from an evil dictator.

Every school child knows that the Statue of Liberty was built in cooperation with the French. It was a centennial project celebrating the declaration of independence which was declared in 1776, and a century later Americans wanted to celebrate the occasion by doing something that was really profound because, of course, the declaration of independence contains very famous words.

The declaration of independence says, among other things, that "all men are created equal and they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights. Among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness". That was an incredible statement for its time and it arose out of enlightened thinking, a renaissance of thought that was occurring in the 18th century when the social institutions of the monarchy were being questioned across the globe. Some of the lead thinkers were French.

The Americans took inspiration from the French and there was the American revolution and the declaration of independence. Then the French in their turn took inspiration from the Americans with the French revolution. This sent out an enormous message to the world that individuals did count. It was not the state that counted, it was individuals who counted and that they had certain inalienable rights. The French in their turn came out with the first declaration of the rights of man and that is where we get the expression, "liberty, equality, fraternity". That came out in 1792.

There is this huge linkage between the French and the Americans in terms of being pioneers in the development of the institutions of liberty and the rule of law and so it was no coincidence and no surprise indeed that the Americans and the French should get together and attempt to build this monument that was to symbolize all these wonderful thoughts. That monument was the Statue of Liberty. The internal structure was built by the famous Alexandre Eiffel, who built the Eiffel Tower, and the Americans built the base. The Statue of Liberty officially opened 10 years later in 1886.

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Everyone in the world knows that monument. It has become, as the Americans like to say, an icon and a beacon of liberty around the world. I think that the principles that are embodied in that statue and the declaration of independence are so ingrained in the American psyche that I believe that the President of the United States is motivated by the very principles that are seen in those two symbols of American society, of American heritage. I take him at his word that he is wanting to go into Iraq to give liberty and opportunity to the starving, oppressed and the tortured. I accept that, but unfortunately, something has gone terribly wrong.

All that idealism I think is falling on barren ground and it is falling on barren ground in the world because public opinion in the world does not see the attack on Iraq as something that does embody the principles of liberty, equality, freedom and life for all. Instead, people see it as a superpower exercising its muscle and trying to come into Iraq for its own personal gain.

• (2145)

One of the problems in language is that much of the debate we have heard from the American representatives at the UN, and even from the president tonight, revolves around the suggestion that resolution 1441 of the Security Council gives legal authorization for the use of armed force against Iraq for its non-compliance. The Americans and the British argue that it does give this legal power and others argue the opposite way. This is to miss the point.

The problem is that the war on Iraq, the attack on Iraq without the support of the UN Security Council, is not seen as justified. All the arguments that the Americans and the British have put forward have not been sufficient to carry world opinion, so we have the situation where 90% of Turks are opposed to an attack on Iraq unilaterally, and around the globe we have similar statistics.

So if a war is not justified, if people do not see that it has been justified, then it becomes an unjust war. This is a terrible problem for the Americans, because quite apart from all other damage that might occur to the Americans, to the free world, to our institutions of the United Nations and whatever else, or the loss of trade or economic consequences, nothing compares to the damage that is going to occur toward the image of the United States as a beacon of liberty, as an upholder of the law, as a bastion of freedom.

If we were to go into New York harbour and take the ferry, not long ago we could look in one direction and see the twin towers of the World Trade Center, the symbol of the economic power of the United States. We could look in the other direction and we could see the Statue of Liberty in the distance, the symbol of freedom, of liberty, and of all the things for which the United States has been admired for many years.

I am very afraid that one of the great consequences of what is going to happen should the Americans decide to go into Iraq is that all of that will be lost. The destruction of the United States as a symbol of hope, of freedom, of liberty, of the rule of law, will be just as certain as the destruction of the World Trade Center. It will not be a matter of flying an aircraft into the Statue of Liberty. It is that the Americans, I truly fear, will destroy that symbol themselves and it will then become only a copper monument 301 feet high. It will not actually represent the hope and the wishes of the world.

I really do despair of what I see coming, because if the world loses confidence in the United States and confidence in the goodwill of the United States to other lands, then I just do not know what the consequences will be. There will be a kind of anarchy that rules the world because suddenly material wealth will become an end in its own right. Material wealth and the pursuit of happiness were always linked with the idea of liberty and giving life to other people and respecting the lives of other people. I am afraid that this has all become twisted around and what the world sees is a superpower that does not have respect for life and is only concerned about its own happiness.

I think it is a very sad situation that we are faced with now. I would hope that even at this late hour the Americans will reconsider this prospect of an attack on Iraq. In the end, whether or not Saddam Hussein is removed does not matter, because there will be an enormous and permanent loss of goodwill toward the United States and I do not know what kind of world will be left after that.

• (2150)

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that most Canadians would acknowledge, even if reluctantly in some cases, that the threat of force has resulted in progress toward disarmament in Iraq. I am not one of those who would advocate that we should shrink from the duty to enforce resolution 1441 and the many other UN resolutions requiring Iraq to disarm.

I would admit that the Iraqi regime has been a serious threat to its own people, to the region it is in, and perhaps to the world beyond. In fact, it could well be a source of chemical, biological or nuclear weapons that might hit North America. It is not surprising to me, therefore, and I think it is a natural preoccupation, for the U.S. administration after 9/11, and it should not surprise us as Canadians that the Americans would be preoccupied with this concern.

To the extent that Iraq has disarmed, it has done so because of the threat of force, unfortunately. So if that threat is the only way to obtain compliance, it must therefore be backed up by a resolve to use force if compliance fails.

It would be wrong to shirk our duty, but it is right to shudder at the thought of war, at its horror, and at its victims, intended or unintended. It is equally right to insist that force should only be used as a very last resort. To whom, then, should we look to be the arbiters of compliance, to tell us whether there has been compliance or not, whether disarmament has ceased or not, if not the UN weapons inspectors? It is their verdict that the world has awaited.

It seems to me it is very important today that when there is one superpower in the world, the U.S., that superpower must lead responsibly, must lead by consensus, in spite of the threat that it feels toward itself.

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Most of us accept that disarmament is a valid objective. We accept that the failure to disarm may justify the use of force, but regime change in Iraq is a different matter entirely. Without question, a new government in Iraq is something devoutly to be wished for. I strongly hope that Saddam Hussein will take seriously the president's ultimatum made earlier this evening and leave Iraq before any more blood is shed, but we have to ask whether regime change is a wise rationale for war.

Canadians ought to be troubled, I think, by the precedent that regime change represents as a concept. In this new millennium, do we choose to move in the direction of international governance, where the rule of law applies to all and is enforced against any state that threatens terror and mass destruction? Or will the world revert to the rule of the powerful, where might is right? I think we have to ask ourselves as human beings which path will lead us to long term peace and security.

I think it is important in this discussion, as we consider our relations with the U.S. these days, that we have strong connections with the Americans. They are our friends, our neighbours and our trading partners. We have many family ties. I have an aunt and uncle, cousins, and a sister-in-law and her family who are American. These are very close, important ties for many reasons. If we must differ over Iraq or over other topics, let us do so with respect.

It is difficult for us, I think, to comprehend how profoundly changed the U.S. population was by 9/11. We know they feel deeply vulnerable, but in spite of our country being targeted in al-Qaeda's list of six countries to be targeted, so far we really have not been struck, so to speak, with a real reason to see ourselves as targets. So in measuring our reactions to America's actions, let us keep in mind that they must feel like they are walking around with bulls' eyes on their foreheads.

Our trade by itself should be a sufficient reason to nurture the relationship we have. Millions of Canadian parents put bread on the table and clothes on their children's backs because their goods and services are sold across the border. Before we indulge in Yankee-bashing, let us consider those who cannot afford such indulgence.

• (2155)

As the friends and allies of the U.S., we have an opportunity to influence the Americans and offer insights that may differ, and will differ sometimes, from their own insights. I think it is important that when we differ, as we do in this case on Iraq, we make sure that at the same time we nurture the influence we have and do not squander it.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at the outset I would like to indicate that I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Vancouver East, the NDP House leader.

President George Bush calls today's deadline for diplomacy at the UN "a moment of truth". The arbitrary, Bush-imposed deadline on diplomacy might perhaps be more accurately described as a tragic distortion of truth.

What is the truth? One important truth is that chief UN weapons inspector Hans Blix has confirmed that peaceful disarmament is not only possible but is happening, is in progress. It is surely a tragedy of monumental proportions that the Bush empire has decided to slam

the door on that process of peaceful disarmament and opt instead for showering bombs on the heads of innocent people. Those bombs will kill and maim men, women and children, and let us not forget that 1.2 million Iraqis have already lost their lives as a result of the economic sanctions.

Furthermore, it is well understood and widely predicted that any decision of the Bush administration to proceed with bombing Iraq will result in a massive destabilization of the entire Middle East. Let us not forget that there are men, women and children who are living in terror and that great numbers are losing their lives as a result of the escalating cycle of violence in the Middle East, which is already very much entrenched.

Another important truth, a truth that I believe gives rise to optimism, is that millions of citizens across the globe have said, unequivocally, no to war in Iraq. Week after week, month after month, hundreds of thousands of Canadians have braved brutally cold winter weather to participate in rallies, demonstrations, vigils, marches, religious services in town halls and teach-ins in an attempt to persuade their own government to stand against a war in Iraq. Those Canadians are tonight celebrating the Prime Minister's announcement that Canada will not join in a pre-emptive strike in Iraq and will not join the U.S. in an illegal war. I think they would want members of the House to congratulate the Liberal government for having listened to the citizens of this country.

In congratulating the government for responding to those pleas to stay the course for peace, I want tonight to urge the government to do yet more. Earlier today I had an opportunity to table the first installment of petitions signed by literally thousands of Canadians calling upon not just this government but this Parliament to take a clear stand for peace. That is why I urge the Prime Minister, following his announcement this afternoon, to proceed with a formal vote here in Parliament, because having the backing of not just those on the government side but I believe a majority on the opposition side as well, will strengthen the hand of our Prime Minister and our government in continuing to stand up and, I would say, in escalating the attempt to stand up to George Bush and persuade him of the sheer madness of what it is that he is about to launch in the way of a pre-emptive strike on Iraq.

I think that Canadians are desperate to see their government take advantage of the narrow window that is left, admittedly a very narrow window and a dangerously short timetable, but nevertheless, Canadians want the government to take advantage of that window before bombs start dropping and to do absolutely everything within the power of this government to even yet bring about a resumption of diplomatic dialogue in the UN Security Council.

• (2200)

It is an insult to multilateralism and international law for the U.S. to walk away from negotiations, declare its intentions to strike Iraq unilaterally and then tell the UN that it will be required to play a role in post-war reconstruction and humanitarian relief.

Humanitarian workers and weapons inspectors are being forced out of Baghdad as we speak here tonight. The oil for food program has been terminated. This will inflict untold massive damage and hardship on the people of Iraq.

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In conclusion let me simply reiterate the words expressed by the son of Martin Luther King, who played such a major role in taking a stand against the war in Vietnam, when he said the following:

One of the most persistent ambiguities we face is that everybody talks about peace as a goal, but among the wielders of power peace is nobody's business. Many men cry 'Peace! Peace!' but they refuse to do the things that make for peace

Before it is too late, we must narrow the chasm between our proclamations of peace and our lowly deeds that precipitate and perpetuate war.

Let us not tonight be so congratulatory of the government for having listened to the citizens of the country. Let us use the time that is available and every means that are available to try to avert this dangerous, destructive war and ensure that we do get on a path to peace, which will not only be important for the people of Iraq but for the future of this world.

• (2205)

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House tonight in the emergency debate on the grave situation in Iraq.

I would like to first thank our colleagues from the Bloc who sought to have the emergency debate tonight. It seems that all we are left with are take note debates and emergency debates. We have been looking for leadership from the government to hold a proper debate and a vote in the House for months and months. Nevertheless, we are having the debate tonight, although there will not be any vote, and I am pleased to participate in it.

Today we heard the Prime Minister finally enunciate a position that I think is shared by a vast majority of Canadians, and that is that Canada must not participate in an illegal war led by President Bush on the people of Iraq. In congratulating the government on finally taking that position, I too, similar to the member for Halifax, want to call on the government to do more than make that position clear. It now needs to be acted upon. To enunciate that position and then to stand silently by and not follow up on it would, I think, ring hollow and false. We call on the government tonight to use every means possible, diplomatic and political persuasion, at the UN with our American allies to avert the war that we are now on the brink of having.

In hearing what the Prime Minister had to say today in the House I have no doubt in my own mind that it was the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who took to the streets, lobbied their MPs and signed petitions that forced the Liberals to act. There has been a groundswell, a great momentum and mobilization across this country because people know what this terrible war is about. They know that President Bush's actions are illegal and not supportable.

We just have to look at the incredible turnouts in November, on January 15 and on February 15 where around the world something like 20 million people participated in the largest anti-war demonstration ever seen in our history. Last Saturday, March 15, people participated in Vancouver and across Canada. There were 200,000 people in Montreal. In Vancouver, www.stopwar.ca, made up of 145 organizations, assembled tens of thousands of people in Vancouver to call on our government and on the international community to avert this war.

One of the things I found interesting at the rally on Saturday was that a number of speakers, including Dr. David Suzuki who made quite a remarkable speech, talked about how the world's last remaining superpower, the U.S., seemed to be calling all the shots and how President Bush was undermining the United Nations and playing such a dangerous game. Speaker after speaker also said that there was an emergence of a second superpower and that was the superpower of the people who had mobilized around the world and who were holding their own governments to account, not only here in Canada but in Europe, in Mexico, in Central America, in the Middle East and all around the globe.

I find that very heartening. I am very proud of the fact that our leader, Jack Layton, participated in those rallies, was part of the solidarity to stop the war on the people of Iraq and that as NDP members we participated fully and stood in solidarity with Canadians in those mobilizations across the country. We did that because we know the war is illegal.

I would like to quote an article in *The Guardian* newspaper about a week ago. It states:

We are teachers of international law. On the basis of the information publicly available there is no justification under international law for the use of military force against Iraq. The UN charter outlaws the use of force with only two exceptions: individual or collective self defence in response to an armed attack, an action authorized by the security council as a collective response to a threat to the peace breach or active aggression. There are currently no grounds for a claim to use such force in self defence.

There are now all kinds of opinions from lawyers around the world who are expressing the same kinds of sentiments.

• (2210)

I want to congratulate organizations like Oxfam Canada which announced on March 10 that it would not accept direct funding from belligerent governments for humanitarian work in Iraq should there be a war in that country. The executive director of Oxfam Canada, Ricky Stuart, said:

We cannot be willing participants when governments attempt to use humanitarian agencies as instruments of a belligerent foreign policy.

That is a profound statement because it shows that civil society, that NGOs, that people are beginning to challenge what they see in the media; the notions of what we are led to believe are somehow the moments of truth as we hear from President Bush and Prime Minister Blair. People are challenging that because they know the war is illegal.

It was chilling to hear George W. Bush say tonight that what he is doing he believes is in the name of peace and democracy, and yet he said not a word about the untold misery, grief, death and civilian casualties that he will cause if he unleashes this awesome military might, the bombs that will be dropped and the potential weapons that will be used. He did not say a word about the devastating impact war will have on ordinary people, on families, on children, on seniors, on people who have no chance to escape.

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We have seen a groundswell of opposition in this country and around the world because people know that not only is the war motivated by a political agenda based on U.S. foreign policy about a regime change that it wants to see for political and economic purposes in Iraq, but people also are concerned about the fact that Mr. Bush's agenda undermines the United Nations itself.

Time and time again the member for Halifax as well as other members of our party have risen in the House to point out that the UN process of weapons inspection has indeed been working and it needs to be given a chance to work. Even Mr. Blix, the chief weapons inspector, has pointed out repeatedly in his progress reports that he is making progress. It is all the more disturbing and grievous now that we are at the 11th hour and we hear the address from Mr. Bush tonight.

It was because of the UN process of weapons inspection that I went to the Edgewood Chemical Biological Centre just outside Washington, D.C. on February 22 with a number of citizens and parliamentarians from five different countries on a mission organized by the Centre for Social Justice in Toronto. We wanted to point out that all weapons of mass destruction needed to be inspected and eliminated. The greatest stockpile of these weapons of mass destruction that are not subject to verification or inspection were actually in the United States. We cannot stand by and see a double standard emerge in what President Bush is demanding of Iraq.

Yes, we do support the weapons inspection process but we need to ensure that kind of process is available and is working in all locations, whether it is in the Middle East or in the United States of America. We need to ensure that weapons of mass destruction are eliminated.

The action in which I participated was successful in raising awareness of the contradictions that exist in the kinds of policies that we see coming from the United States. We had a lot of support from civil society organizations in the United States that have also been mobilizing in terms of opposing what their president has been doing.

Today in Parliament we heard some good news from our government but we implore our government, on behalf of the Canadian people, to let us do our job in the House. Let us debate and have a vote in terms of what other measures can now be taken, to call on our American allies and the United Nations to forestall where we are now, which is on the brink of war.

● (2215)

That is why we are in this place. We exercise those democratic rights. That is what we are here to do. That is what we want to do.

On behalf of my constituents from Vancouver East and all the representations that I have received, I call on the government to allow that vote to take place in this House so that we can exercise our democratic rights.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies.

[*English*]

I am pleased to be here in the House tonight. I am sorry it is at such a late hour but I had a previous engagement which did not allow me to be here earlier. However I was pleased that the Secretary of State for the Middle East was able to put the position for the government and that the Secretary of State for Asia-Pacific has been here during the debate. I consider these debates extremely important and I appreciate the words of the hon. member for Vancouver East. I support exactly the thrust of her comments that we are here in the House to debate and consider these extraordinarily important issues.

Today, the Prime Minister announced the position of the Government of Canada in this House. I believe it has the general support of the members of this House. I was pleased to hear the support coming from the opposition benches, not only now but also earlier in the day and also from our own benches. From the number of calls that I have received in my office and the offices of other MPs, it is a position which receives the general approbation and enthusiastic support of the population of Canada.

I believe it has that support for many reasons. The first reason is that it is consistent with the Prime Minister's personal and this government's constant support for the multilateral system which we have worked so hard in Canada to make a success as a guarantee for a more peaceful world in which our children can grow up. We worked hard during the course of the last few months to bring the Security Council together. We worked hard to find a way where we could bridge the gap between those who felt that Saddam Hussein could be disarmed but over a period of time that the pressure perhaps would not have been significant on him and those who felt that the time was extremely short and the pressure had to be immediate.

Canada therefore made its position clear today, that without a clear mandate from the Security Council, from the body that has been entrusted by the world to deal with directions over the issues of peace and security, we were not in a position to participate in the use of force against Iraq.

We also have made the point, and it is an important one, that we are committed with our American, British, French and other allies to the war on terrorism, that we retain that commitment and that this commitment is not something that, whatever disagreements we may have on a specific issue, will cause us to flinch. We are committed to putting troops into Afghanistan. We have committed to retaining our ships in that area to interdict terrorists to act in defence of those men and women of our armed services who are serving with distinction in that theatre.

We recognize that this will be a challenge for the United Nations system which we have all worked so hard to try to ensure it would be a success. I do not despair for the United Nations system. I believe it will continue to be needed. It will be needed for reconstruction, as President Bush has already personally said in his speech in the Azores and to which he made reference tonight. I listened to his words tonight with great interest as he laid out the case that the United States has against Saddam Hussein.

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I made it clear in my telephone call with Colin Powell earlier this afternoon, when he was good enough to call me, that we respected the United States for the efforts it had made to ensure the disarmament of Saddam Hussein and that whatever differences we might have, nothing would distract from the respect that we owed each other and the mutual respect that we had for one another.

To those who believe there is a problem or a threat to the relationship between the United States and Canada because of the conduct of either one of us in the course of this action, I do not believe there is a threat. Our relationship is one that is founded on immense friendship. It is founded on much more than diplomatic initiatives on one or two items. It is founded on centuries of living together on this continent and co-operation between families and institutions. We will work our way through this with the sense of mutual respect that we have for one another, which has brought us to here, and we will continue to do so in that light.

We believe the positions that we have set out in the House today and that we have consistently followed throughout this issue have laid out Canada's commitment to a multilateral system and at the same time our respect for and our willingness to work with our U.S. allies.

• (2220)

[*Translation*]

We have made a decision today, in the interests of Canada and Canadians. Some have suggested in this House that we adopt the French position, while others suggested that we adopt the American position. We have always maintained that we were clearly going to adopt a position for the good of Canadians and Canada, and in the interests of Canada and Canadians. And I think that the decision announced today by the Prime Minister specifically reflects this concern.

[*English*]

In conclusion I would like to say that I am proud of the decision we have made today. As Canadians we will meet the challenges in the days, weeks, months and even years to come in the spirit of a recognition that we must all seek to work for peace. We must all seek to find the conditions in which peace will prevail. Canada is committed to this. Canada has a unique past and has a unique capacity in the future to bring conditions where peace may prevail in many corners of the world.

The government is committed to using our interest, our abilities and the great goodwill, which this country has accumulated over the years, in the interest of peace, security and justice throughout the world. While we may have problems today, whatever those problems are, nothing will cause us to flinch from our determination and our absolute efforts in the future to keep Canada at the forefront in the work for peace and for social justice throughout the world.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Charbonneau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at a time when there seems to be every indication that the Bush administration and a few allied forces will be attacking Iraq in a matter of hours or days, I wish to say how sad, distressing, revolting and, more importantly, dangerous this situation is.

These feelings are shared by those people of my riding who have contacted me these past few months. They are also shared by hundreds of thousands of who rallied in the streets of Montreal and a dozen other cities in Quebec last Saturday and over the past month. All these people to whom I wish to pay tribute today share these feelings, which I want to reflect in my remarks.

I will take a moment, however, to say how pleased I am with the position taken by the Canadian government and our Prime Minister with respect to both the basic issue and the approach throughout this past year. Canada's position has always been clear, contrary to what we may have heard. It was based on three main elements.

First, as far as Canada is concerned, Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi regime must comply with UN resolutions. Canada does not have any sympathy for this regime and has consistently supported the UN's approach and objectives.

The second pillar of our policy is as follows. To ensure that the Iraq of Saddam Hussein is no longer a threat to its neighbours and the international community, Canada supported renewed and increased inspections. This process produced results.

In practical terms, Saddam Hussein's regime is paralyzed, surrounded and rendered powerless. Canada has proposed a very strict work schedule for the teams of weapons inspectors over the next few weeks. This program would still take several more weeks. This initiative received the support of all the international inspectors. Therefore, we put forward a progressive process to reach the goal, without war.

The third pillar of Canada's position is to preserve the UN, to preserve the only international organization able to ensure that certain rules of law are respected around the world. I am proud of the responsible and conservative attitude taken by our government and our Prime Minister.

Remember that, in September 2002, President Bush did not want anything to do with the UN. Our Prime Minister and other political figures persuaded him to seek the UN's approval. We know that Mr. Bush approached the UN very reluctantly. Nonetheless, he got a resolution, the famous resolution 1441, passed unanimously.

Inspections are coming to fruition. According to the U.S., it is because of all the pressure it exerted. Why not then benefit from the pressure that was exerted? Why not keep pushing in the same direction for another few weeks, since we are making progress? Why is the U.S. so eager to go to war?

At 8 o'clock tonight, we heard President Bush say that he wanted all discussions to stop. Over a month ago, he told us "the game is over". We have been hearing about this for a month now. Tonight, unconditional surrender by Saddam Hussein is what he demanded. He is setting the U.S. up as the supreme court for the international community. Not only the UN—which he called irresponsible—but the whole international community is not taking its responsibilities. He says "I, George Bush, will set out the responsibilities we have to assume. I will speak on behalf of the whole world and submit our fair demands".

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• (2225)

How arrogant of him, since we know that the international community, the bishops, the churches and the Pope do not agree with him. Last weekend, major U.S. newspapers said no to war.

President Bush is playing a very dangerous game. By riding roughshod over the UN to defend his country's right to attack, to launch a pre-emptive strike, and to make unilateral decisions on everything, based on its own interests, Bush and his government are acting in a very dangerous and irresponsible manner.

Hence, the U.S. is paving the way for other super powers who want to settle things with their own neighbours or minorities. The U.S. is also setting itself up as a new world power that can dictate to others what to do and take whatever it wants from whomever it wants.

As Canadians we live in a country full of resources, abundant minerals, water, oil and gas, more than anyone else has. We must, more than anyone else, support strong international institutions and the establishment of world governance, where the smallest—we are not among the weakest, but we are among the smallest countries in terms of population—will never be at the mercy of the largest and their neighbours. This is an important message that we as Canadians must send to the international community.

The Americans and their allies are taking a terrible risk. In addition to the horrible massacres, the suffering and destruction that comes with any war, Bush is playing with fire by giving himself the mandate to invade Iraq and overthrow its regime. What will the ramifications be for Iraq, the Kurds, Turkey, the Arab world and the Muslim world?

Bush is in the process of giving Islamic fundamentalists the very momentum and unity they seek to try to impose their vision on their own people and destroy any glimmer of democratic or social progress that has been achieved here and in their country.

What gives Americans under the Bush administration the right to dictate international law, when for the past 30 or 40 years they have supported, trained and armed dictatorships on all continents, including in association with bin Laden and Saddam Hussein?

This war is unjustified and unfair. It is illegal and illegitimate. It is a terrible and dangerous mistake.

As for Canada, thanks to the careful and informed position that we have taken, we must advocate for the side of international law, now more than ever, we must back the UN and its institutions, promote the necessary reforms, participate in humanitarian aid, open our doors to refugees and contribute to the reconstruction of Iraq.

Not only will we need to rebuild the roads that have been ruined, the factories and bridges that have been demolished and wrecked, but we will first have to try to rebuild good relations with the Arab and Muslim world. These communities have values that are similar and comparable to ours, based on humanitarianism, fraternity and openness.

Our Arab and Muslim friends in Canada and in other countries must know that there are peace-loving people in North America, in the United States and Canada, and that they, too, dream of building a

world that is balanced and sensible. A world where new international relations will be based on cooperation. These relations will allow us to work in a healthier environment that will allow everyone to eat their fill, to get an education and to be healthy and free.

• (2230)

We have all the means to reach these objectives. President Bush is always saying this:

[*English*]

It is a matter of resolve.

Let us put that resolve at the service of peace.

[*Translation*]

This is the message that Canada must send despite these difficult times, a message of hope.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC): Mr. Speaker, under the Liberal government, Canada has gone from influencing the world, to first becoming irrelevant and now becoming an irritant.

Under the Progressive Conservative government, Canada helped shape the world. Under the current Prime Minister's government, Canada is trying to escape it.

The 1991 Persian Gulf conflict was an example of how a Canadian government played a role in shaping both UN and U.S. policy. Then prime minister Mulroney, working with the leader of my party as the Canadian foreign affairs minister, was able to convince then President Bush from taking unilateral military action to liberate Kuwait, to help build a multilateral UN sanctioned effort.

We were trusted then by the world and trusted by the United States. We used our role as a powerful middle power to shape the world at that time and to prevent a U.S. unilateral effort.

Canada should have, in the current Persian Gulf crisis, played a leadership role in helping avert a non UN sanctioned effort. However, the government's ambiguity, hesitancy and poll mongering has served to reduce Canada's role to that of an irrelevant bystander. In fact we have seen 10 years of defence and foreign policy neglect and drift under the Liberal government that has resulted in a role today where nobody knows really where Canada stands. When we finally do make up our mind on a foreign policy issue, it is too late to have any influence on the rest of the world.

Several weeks ago one of Canada's major newspapers had as its headline something to the effect that the Prime Minister was prepared to back Bush. Another Canadian newspaper ran a headline on the same day saying that the Prime Minister refused to back Bush.

The fact that two of Canada's major newspapers were able to present diametrically opposite headlines about the same Prime Minister's position on the same important foreign policy issue indicates the confusion around the government's position on this and other issues. The problem is the Prime Minister uses ambiguity as his *modus operandi*, which is bad for domestic policy and is dangerous and irresponsible in foreign policy.

This debate has become a bumper sticker debate. It has been dumbed down to sound bites and as such, it is ignoring a lot of the complexities of foreign policy in the most complicated part of a very complicated world. There are some who say there should be no Canadian military support or intervention in any conflict in Iraq at this time, some who say only if it is UN backed, and others who say we should simply support the U.S. and the U.K. led efforts without really trying to shape them.

Foreign policy ought to be aimed at building a better world and at protecting our national interests. Failing to shape the efforts of our traditional allies, failing to stand with our allies, does neither. It certainly does not help to build a better world and it clearly is contrary to Canada's national interests.

If Canada had stood by the U.S., the United Kingdom and Australia and helped those countries to shape UN support, that would have been far better. A unified effort of the United Nations would be far more effective in seeking to achieve both disarmament and a regime change in Iraq.

However, the government's foreign policy is shaped more by anti-Americanism than it is by respect for institutional institutions. It is also shaped, it would seem, by the Prime Minister's affinity for dictators. He was willing to pepper spray Canadian youth to protect Suharto from embarrassment. He has defended and stood by Mugabe. Now of course with Hussein he is opposed to action to see regime replacement in Iraq.

● (2235)

I think the Prime Minister admires these dictators and their ability to cling to power. Perhaps he would like to emulate them. I guess it would be a surprise to Canadians to expect that the Prime Minister would ever support regime change, particularly not regime change that would lead to a more democratic government. He certainly does not support regime change in Canada and I do not think he should be expected to support regime change in Iraq.

We should be shaping the policy of and standing beside our allies, the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia. I am not suggesting a ready, aye, ready blind support for the U.S. We should not blindly follow the UN or the U.S. We are a sovereign country and we should develop a sovereign foreign policy. Canada should play a leadership role in shaping U.S. and UN policy, as we did in 1991.

Recently when U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell presented his case for war in Iraq, our foreign affairs minister and our Prime Minister learned of that case by watching CNN. That is how far away we are from shaping the policies of either the U.S. or the UN.

Mr. Hussein has failed to comply with 16 UN resolutions. He has actively thwarted UN weapons inspections efforts. The sanctions placed upon his country have served to hurt innocent citizens but have not hurt or weakened his regime. Clearly the current approach is not working. Obviously there is a strong case to be made for action against Mr. Hussein and regime change in Iraq.

The UN Security Council led by France has chosen to give Mr. Hussein more time. After 12 years it believes that more time is warranted. The UN was not right in Somalia or in Rwanda. The UN is not without fault or flaws. Libya after all is the chairman of the UN

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human rights commission. We should not blindly follow the UN. I am not suggesting that we blindly follow the U.S. either. But we could be helping to shape the approach of the U.S., the U.K. and the coalition of the willing on this issue.

I would rather change it from a coalition of the willing to a coalition of the wilful by focusing on an end game, not just in terms of regime change in Iraq but a macro approach to the entire Middle East. We should be focusing on an end game, including reconstruction and democratization and in helping develop a vision not just for a post-Saddam Hussein Iraq but for a more stable, democratic and peaceful Middle East.

President Bush's recent speech to the American Enterprise Institute provided some broad strokes of an end game, but lacked details on how to achieve that end game. Canada should play a leadership role in helping to fill in the blank spaces in that end game working with President Bush and others and to propose a Canadian doctrine, so to speak, for the Middle East with a macro approach to the Middle East, including a democratically led Iraq, working with Israel and the Palestinian authority to first of all ensure a democratically led Palestinian authority and ultimately to an independent and democratically led Palestine.

It is not too late for Canada to introduce a Canadian doctrine today to actually help shape the future of the Middle East. We should have done that before. The fact is that we are now in a position where we basically have a choice of either supporting or not supporting our allies in an imminent war in the Middle East with less opportunity to shape the position of those allies or to help create a long term macro end game approach to a more stable, peaceful and democratic Middle East. It is absolutely awful that we have lost the opportunity to do that.

● (2240)

We can still play a positive role through a Canadian doctrine today in helping to provide a vision for a part of the world that I described as the most complicated part of an increasingly complicated world and in now being able to both work with the U.S. and broker with the UN an agreement in a post-Hussein reconstruction and democratization effort in Iraq. All our foreign policy efforts, in my opinion, ought to be guided by the principles of democracy and democratization.

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Some would argue that Iraq is not ready for this sort of democratic leadership. Those same arguments were made in post-war Japan in saying that Japan was not ready for democratic leadership and democratic system at the time. I believe fundamentally that the best, most natural governing system for people is democracy and that people anywhere in the world deserve to live under democratic freedoms. Part of the role that we can play, if we can regain the trust of our allies after this debacle and if we can regain our relevance to the world after this situation passes, is to play a role in helping to shape a more democratic and stable Mideast.

We do have a responsibility to present not just to the world but to Canadians an independent, sovereign foreign policy, but it should not be guided simply by anti-Americanism. It should be guided by our desire to build a better, more stable world and to protect our national interests.

France, that bastion of foreign policy consistency, is certainly protecting its national interests in this most recent UN decision, or intransigence, not to support a military effort in Iraq. We are failing to protect our national interest by thumbing our nose at our greatest trading partner and ally, the United States, and at our traditional ally, the United Kingdom. We are choosing to be pulled around by the nose by France, while at the same time thumbing our nose at our best allies. I think that might be a shortsighted way to appeal to immediate polls, but part of leadership is not simply focusing on next week's polls but on the challenges and opportunities of this century.

I think it would be a laudable goal for Canada to seek to build a more stable, peaceful and democratic Mideast, to help provide a blueprint for that as part of the Canadian doctrine, and to work with our partners in the UN and in the United States and with our traditional allies to help make that happen. If we were to succeed in that, in 10 years or 15 years we could look back at this time in history and be proud of the role that Canada played in shaping the world and shaping a more secure Mideast.

I am concerned, though, that we are missing that opportunity and will see a continued drift by the government and an ambiguity and a lack of foreign policy consistency or principle. That is not good for Canada and it is not good for the world.

In a post-cold war environment, in an environment where there really is only one superpower left in the world, it is now more important than ever that Canada be a trusted partner of the U.S., trusted by the United States and trusted by the world in being able to work between and shape the policies of both. That is what we are capable of. That is what we have done in the past. That is what we will be capable of doing in the future, but we have to step up to the plate and demonstrate courage, vision, foresight and the intestinal fortitude to make not simply the politically palatable short term decisions, but to actually take the courageous long term view and do what is right and what is not always popular.

• (2245)

Mr. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is an old and not unfamiliar adage which says, "When the guns roar, the muses are silent". While the countdown to war has begun and while the legal muses may be unable to prevent it, international law does provide an appropriate framework: first, for appreciating the general

principles of international law respecting the use of force; second, for assessing the validity of the recourse to the use of force by the United States, the United Kingdom or any coalition of the willing; third, for invoking or applying the legal norms that govern the exercise of the use of force; and finally, for providing a normative guideline of the conduct of foreign policy, be it that of the United States, the United Kingdom or Canada.

Accordingly, with this in mind, I will share some basic principles that underpin such a juridical analysis. One preambular comment: the United States' resort to force or the resort to force of the coalition of the willing might well seem on the face of it an arguably justifiable use of military force, for, simply put, Saddam Hussein has directed and presided over one of the most tyrannical and brutal regimes in modern history.

Indeed, for more than 25 years Saddam Hussein has sought to acquire chemical, biological and nuclear weapons and has, in several documented cases, not only succeeded but has in fact used them. He gassed 60,000 of his own people in 1986 in Halabja in a modern genocide. He launched two catastrophic wars, sacrificing nearly a million Iraqis and killing or wounding more than a million Iranians. He has violated the United Nations resolutions, some 16 resolutions over 12 years, resolutions that found him to be in material breach of his disarmament obligations, including the most recent one of four months ago, a resolution that gave him a final opportunity to fully and immediately disarm or face serious consequences.

Most important and most disturbingly, he is the only head of state to have committed the most horrific of all international crimes, crimes against the peace, sometimes referred to as the mother of all crimes, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. But while Saddam Hussein is clearly a war criminal and has committed the most serious of international Nuremberg-type crimes, this does not necessarily authorize the use of force against him, unless such recourse to the use of force is consonant with international law.

Admittedly, it has been said that international law is something that the powerful need not heed and that the righteous need not obey. It may well be that President Bush believes that the convergence of power and right on his side is such that it authorizes the use of force, but there is a normative and juridical framework applicable both to the powerful and the righteous, which I shall now seek to share with colleagues in the House.

The first and foundational principle, which is set forth in article 2, paragraph 4 of the United Nations charter, is the prohibition on the use of force save for two exceptions: first, the exercise of the right of self-defence in response to an armed attack as mandated under article 51 of the charter; and second, the right of the Security Council, acting under chapter 7 of its authority, to determine a situation to be one of a breach of international peace and security and to authorize military action to address that breach to counter aggression and the like.

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President Bush has argued, first, that he has a right of pre-emptive self-defence, that is to say, that in a post-9/11 universe the United States nor any other power is not required to await an armed attack which, with the convergence of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction and rogue states, can convert that into a suicide pact.

However, even allowing for a flexible interpretation of the right of self-defence in a post-9/11 universe, even allowing for a broader interpretation of that right, nonetheless there must at least be credible evidence of the imminence of such an attack. There must be credible evidence of a clear and present danger of such an attack. No such evidence exists at the present time.

● (2250)

Second, the president has argued, and has argued again this evening, that Iraq is in material breach of UN Security Council resolution 1441 and that serious consequences thereby ensue, including authorizing the use of force. This brings me to the second principle, that is to say, UN Security Council resolution 1441 as a basic juridical framework for appreciating the legalities here.

It is somewhat ironic that President Bush, who helped craft the UN Security Council resolution, which was very much a creature of the United States and the United Kingdom, should seek to invoke that UN Security Council resolution as a legal basis for the recourse to the use of force, because that resolution states clearly that it is only the UN Security Council, not the United States, not the United Kingdom, not the combination of them or others, that can determine whether, first, there has been a material breach, second, that serious consequences flow from that material breach of Iraq's disarmament obligations and, third, that it authorizes the use of force. No such determinations have yet been made by the UN Security Council. Simply put, the UN Security Council resolution 1441 is not a self-executing act that can be invoked by any state acting on its own.

That brings me to the third principle, the principle known as the exhaustion of remedies short of war. Indeed, the United Nations charter on customary international law requires states to seek peaceful resolutions to their disputes. Article 33 of the charter states:

The parties to any dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, shall, first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice.

It may well be, and the United States and the United Kingdom may well argue, and have argued, that they have exhausted all other means, but even in the case of a clear act of aggression or threat to the peace and even in the case of the presumed exhaustion of other means, it is only the UN Security Council which is required, under the charter article 41, to first employ measures not involving the use of armed force, and only when such measures would "be inadequate or have proven to be inadequate", as article 42 states, can the Security Council authorize the use of force.

I might state parenthetically that I regret that the Canadian bridging proposal, which set forth disarmament benchmarks or tests for Iraq to comply with as part of its disarmament obligations and provided timelines for testing the implementation of those disarmament obligations, was not adopted. We are in fact only 10 days away from the expiry of those timeframes; to think that we may have to witness a recourse to the use of force in 48 hours when we could

have waited another week and arguably had a UN Security Council resolution that in fact determined that Iraq was indeed in breach of its disarmament obligations as set forth in those benchmarks or tests. And there would have been a timeframe within which that needed to be fulfilled.

That brings me now to principle number four and that is a refined multilateralism approach, or the invocation of the Kosovo precedent and principle. I am referring here to the invocation of the argument that the coalition of the willing resorting to or invoking the Kosovo precedent and principle can go to war. In the same way that a UN Security Council resolution did not exist then but there was a coalition at the time, so can a coalition now engage in the recourse to force without such a resolution.

● (2255)

However, this ignores the fact that at that time a significant majority was secured for a UN Security Council resolution that resulted in a veto by Russia and therefore did not pass.

Today, we have a situation where even a second resolution could not have been put to a vote because a majority vote simply was not there. At the same time the objective then was humanitarian intervention, and even arguing that President Bush has now, in fact, expanded the objective for the use of force from the breach of disarmament obligations under UN Security Council resolution 1441 to that of humanitarian intervention or regime change, it is still clear that even for humanitarian intervention a UN Security Council resolution would be required. Yet such a UN Security Council resolution for that purpose has not even been sought, let alone sanctioned, and regime change is not otherwise permissible under international law.

That leads me to the fifth principle, which is the principle of unintended consequences. If there is one given with respect to the use of force, it is that war is unpredictable. If precedent be a guide, and if the witness testimony before our Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade be instructive in this regard, then the use of force may well trigger a humanitarian catastrophe, as the witness testimony before our committee cited.

Which segues into a sixth principle, what I would call the right action principle, having regard to all the circumstances and the prospective adverse fallouts from the use of force. Is this the right action to be taken at this time?

The prospective use of force may well result in a series of adverse fallouts, including not only untold large numbers of civilian dead and wounded—and women and children are the likely first victims of such a use of force—but also the destabilization of the region so that it may not achieve the goal of democracy, peace and security that is sought, but in fact it may unravel both with respect to Iraq and beyond.

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Regarding the destruction of the Iraqi infrastructure, the undertaking by the United States and others to rebuild Iraq does not in any way assuage us. The inflaming of the Arab and Muslim world by an attack will be perceived as being an attack on Islam and on Arabs. Even though with respect to humanitarian intervention in Kosovo it was for the sake of saving Muslims at the time, nonetheless the perception at this point, in the absence of any perceived legitimate framework, may be very different. The provoking of more terror would not contribute to the struggle against terror but, in fact, to the encouragement of it through the disruption of the global economy in such a way that we would be faced with untold misery rather than the securing of a freer and stable world.

It may well be that none of these adverse actions that I have just cited may occur. I am only saying that in making a determination to go to war, one has to factor into that decision the principle of the law of unintended consequences and therefore the right action to be deployed in that regard.

That leads me to principle seven and the distinction between *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*. In other words, international law is relevant not only in assessing the legality of the recourse to the use of force, but also the validity in the exercise of force. However, paradoxical as the nomenclature may seem, we have laws of war, laws governing the use of force in armed conflict, that perhaps are better known as international humanitarian law principles.

These international humanitarian law principles are very clear in what is permissible and impermissible. The use of weapons in any armed conflict must be proportional to the threat, must be necessary for effective self-defence, must not be directed at civilians or civilian objects, must respect the principle of civilian immunity, must be able to discriminate between civilian and military targets, must not cause unnecessary or aggravated suffering to combatants, must not affect states not party to the conflict, must not cause severe, widespread or long term damage to the environment, and must endeavour to avoid civilian infrastructure which is already operating at minimal efficiency.

● (2300)

This is, generally speaking, the framework with respect to the international humanitarian norms applicable to the exercise of the use of force, which leads me now to the eighth principle.

That is the principle of accountability for breaches of international humanitarian law. Clearly, Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi leadership are responsible under international criminal law as well as humanitarian law for their Nuremberg crimes, crimes against peace, war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

Clearly, one does not anticipate, nor should one impute, that the coalition of the willing forces will in any way engage in any crimes similar to that. However, the principles I enunciated with respect to the norms of international humanitarian law, the most important among them being respect for the principle of civilian immunity, are sacrosanct. We now have a regime of international criminal law and an international criminal court which is in force that can hold even members of the coalition of the willing accountable, believing as they do and even imputing to them the good faith that they are acting out of right intent. Nonetheless, they too could be held accountable for said breaches of international humanitarian law.

While the United States has not ratified the international criminal court, the United Kingdom has, and therefore armed forces from the United Kingdom could, should they engage in any breaches of international humanitarian law, find themselves liable first of all before the British court if not before the international criminal court. Even U.S. nationals could find themselves liable under principles of universal jurisdiction before other jurisdictions.

I make this statement because as a basic principle of notice before any armed conflict with the kind of weaponry that may be engaged, this principle of accountability for breaches of international humanitarian law must be given.

Clearly, I make no equivalence between that which has already been committed—the international Nuremberg crimes that have already been committed by Saddam Hussein and his regime—and prospective breaches of international humanitarian law that could be committed by the allied forces. Nonetheless, under the principle, such notice must be given.

Finally, we come to what I would call the principle of retroactive validity. That principle is perhaps the most compelling one that may operate in favour of President Bush and the coalition of the willing. The principle of retroactive validity is such that if the resort to the use of force is exercised, if a war is launched and even if there is some dubious question about the legalities of the recourse of the use of force, if the United States, the United Kingdom and the coalition of the willing do uncover weapons of mass destruction, do uncover evidence that Iraq was deceiving the inspection regime and the international community, and are greeted with a responsive greeting by the Iraqi people, who see them as liberators and the like, it may well be that at that point one might perhaps consider that the initial legalities or the question of legalities of the recourse to the use of force will have been overtaken by the realities of what I would call the principle of retroactive validity.

In conclusion, the juridical framework organized around principles of international law may yet be for us the best looking glass to appreciate what in the days ahead may become a recourse to an extensive use of military force, during which we will have to assess what is the validity of this recourse to the use of force, what is the validity of the exercise of the use of force, what is the accountability that is involved, and what are our respective obligations post the use of force.

● (2305)

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the events of today have been extraordinary and will not soon be forgotten. They have placed us on the brink of war and have sent shock waves around the world.

The day began with the news that resolution 1441 had been withdrawn or held in abeyance at the UN Security Council. The day ended with the live broadcast of United States President George W. Bush presenting his ultimatum to Saddam Hussein and his sons to leave Iraq within 48 hours or face the consequences of military action. It is a day that peace loving people everywhere had hoped would never come.

Just this weekend an article appeared in the *Winnipeg Free Press* written by well known author Karen Toole who wrote the following:

There's a fine line between faithfulness and fanaticism. There's a fine line between pride and prejudice, dedication and domination, patriotism and panic, enthusiasm and evangelization. In the "regular" calendar of the world, March 17 is St. Patrick's Day, and the eve of Purim, but this year March 17 is "D day"; decision day, we are told (once again), for U.S. President George W. Bush and the UN. So saints days and faith festivals can get swallowed up by this relentless war machine.

Today, March 17, our worst fears have been confirmed. In 48 hours, on Wednesday, March 19, the war on Iraq may have begun.

Our only relief today comes from knowing that our Canadian government has finally taken a clear position and said Canada will not be party to a war declared without the sanction of the United Nations. For that we congratulate the government and the thousands of Canadians who spoke out over the past several months; who walked for peace; who signed petitions; who sent letters, faxes and e-mails; and who said with one voice that we ought to support diplomacy, a path of peace and a resolution to the Iraq conflict within the framework of international law.

Tonight we want to acknowledge the significant step taken by the Prime Minister, but in so doing we must indicate our concern about the failure of the government to show clarity on the matter of Canadian troops presently in the region. We call upon the government to clarify its position with respect to the Canadian troops involved with U.S. and British forces on an exchange basis and who, unless called back, will be part of the war on Iraq. Whether we are talking about one or 30 or 3,000 troops, the presence of Canadian troops in this war is an act of complicity.

While we congratulate the government for its position clearly enunciated in the House today, we express our concern and opposition for its failure to allow the House of Commons to have a vote on the fundamental issue facing us. It is clear that the government's position would have had much more power and strength if the matter had been put to the House of Commons for a vote.

It is clear that Canadians want us to pursue diplomacy and peace as long as we have time to do so. Canadians know that war will mean a humanitarian crisis. We all know that in the event of war there will be major damage to Iraqi infrastructure which is critical to the provision of health, nutritional and social needs of millions of citizens. We know that the number of refugees will certainly be major and that environmental damage will be incalculable.

● (2310)

The World Health Organization estimates casualties will rise in the hundreds of thousands. UNICEF calculates that the basic nutritional needs of more than three million Iraqi civilians will be unmet. According to the leader of a Canadian funded mission to Iraq and a report by international experts entitled, "The Impact of a New War on Iraqi Children" casualties among children have reached in the hundreds of thousands.

We all know the importance of acting seriously and concretely with measures to prohibit Iraq's acquisition and retention of weapons of mass destruction. For that there is no hesitation. However, clearly, it is incumbent upon Canada on the eve of a war in Iraq to do everything possible and to use every imaginable tactic to call upon the United States to think twice before it makes that final decision on Wednesday, March 19, and as others have said in this House tonight,

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to call on Saddam Hussein to do what is so necessary in this situation; to pull back, to pull out and to give peace a chance.

In these hours leading up to Wednesday, March 19, it is clear that Canada does have a major role to play. Should war come, God forbid, clearly Canada has a role to call for strict rules for the protection of civilians, to demand that depleted uranium never be used in weapons employed in the war, to call for limiting the use of weapons like landmines and cluster bombs and to call on forces in the region to avoid targets where civilians are at risk and where collateral damage can be very great.

That of course is not to detract from the overriding objective at hand, to do everything we can to try to avert war at the eleventh hour. Today in this debate, we congratulate the government but we urge our government to do everything possible to ensure that all steps are taken to prevent this tragic development, the war, looming around us.

I want to close by simply reading a little story that is well known in Winnipeg circles. It is called "The Robin and the Dove" and I think it says everything that Canadians wish for in terms of peace and what is possible. It goes like this:

The robin returned from its winter quarters to Winnipeg and everybody was very glad to see the robin, for a robin announces that spring is coming. Not that the winters are that bad in Winnipeg; throwing snowballs, making a snowman, printing yourself in the snow as an angel, admiring winter wonderland, but yes they are a bit long.

Now it was one of those years that you think the winter is gone, but the winter turns around and teases and Bea Boop, still there!

The robin went to see his friend the dove and asked "how much weighs a snowflake?". "A snowflake? It feels cold and wet on your nose, but does not weigh at all. Why?"

Yesterday the robin said "I saw for the first time snow. I was sitting on my branch and counted all the snowflakes that fell on my branch. A million! Nothing happened, but when one million and one snowflakes fell on my branch, the branch broke". Then it flew away.

The dove thought, if a million snowflakes will not break a branch, but a million and one can do it, maybe you have a million voices and nothing happens but when you hear a million voices that can bring peace.

It can be your voice or his or hers or mine but we need a million voices with it.

● (2315)

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was a little over a month ago that I walked with my three sons in Vancouver in a peace march. I walked not as a politician and I walked very quietly. I walked with mothers, I walked with babies, I walked with senior citizens, I walked with church people and for a short time, I walked with my colleagues, physicians against war. There was a sense that day of people coming together and there was a sense of hope. There was a sense that with goodwill, one could change things, that with goodwill, one could move forward, that with goodwill, one could avert an impending disaster. People who had never walked before, walked on that day. I felt quite humbled. I walked as a mother, I walked as a physician and I walked as a Canadian.

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Today many people voiced how surprised they were that the Prime Minister finally came up with what they consider to be a focus and to point clearly on what Canada wished to do with regard to Iraq. I was not surprised because I knew all along that the Prime Minister, whose mentor was Lester Pearson, who worked with the government of Pierre Trudeau, who in fact has followed in a long line of Liberal governments, would do the right thing. I know what he has always felt. He has a commitment to multilateralism and he has a commitment to the United Nations. It has always been thus. He is a strong Liberal, with clear Liberal values. I have never doubted his position for a moment. I always thought his position was particularly clear. However his position today made me again, one more time in the last month and a half, proud to be a Canadian.

Tonight I watched the President of the United States, George W. Bush, speak. For the first time, I felt a strong sense of despair. I felt all hope, all the best ideas of men and women of goodwill, the Canadian position that we brought forward and that I was so proud of when Paul Heinbecker went to the United Nations and brought forward a set of ideas within which we could set guidelines and timelines for a process of disarmament within Iraq, all those things, had come to naught.

In fact and indeed when George W. Bush made his speech today, I got a sense that it was not whether he would consider if there would be a war but that he had determined all along that he would go to war, it was only a matter of when and how. This was not a case of finding ways in which one could avert war or finding ways in which one could disarm Saddam Hussein. We have all heard, and no one doubts it for a moment, that Saddam Hussein is in deed a monster committing genocide and crimes against humanity. One got the sense tonight that this war had already been cast in stone a very long time ago.

However, one does not despair for long. Tonight we have to regroup and we have to ask ourselves whether Canada can come up again with a plan and play a strong role in averting this war, albeit in 48 hours and albeit it at the eleventh hour. I think we can. I think we can come together and come up with ideas in which we can ensure that disarmament occurs. We can ensure that Saddam Hussein is forced to do the right thing. There are ways in which this can be done. We have to work with like-minded countries and we have to speed up our efforts to do so.

When I listened to Mr. Bush tonight, I remembered, and I was a very young girl, when President Kennedy faced a similar crisis and decided that he would indeed threaten war during the Cuban missile crisis. This was another American president at a time when America was the super power in the world, albeit with another super power, Russia. I remember that while the force, the ships, moved forward, we all waited with bated breath to see whether there would be a war. Indeed there was a very good reason for President Kennedy to move his ships into place. There was a real threat to America. Missiles were being set up in Cuba directed at the U.S., which is not what we see here today with regard to the United States and Saddam Hussein.

• (2320)

I recall then that even while Kennedy spoke of war, even while he clenched his fists very tightly and held them up and said, "We will not back down", he was working behind the scenes constantly, as

history tells us, with Russia and Mr. Khrushchev to see if, as men of goodwill, they could avert a war, to see war itself as a threat was not what they should use as a way of averting war, which is in itself an irony, using the threat of war to avert war. I think this is what one hoped would happen at the last moment here today.

I want to say clearly that we will see Canadians walk again. We will see them walking tomorrow probably. We will be getting letters. I know that my office will be inundated with phone calls because, as we heard tonight from my colleague from Mount Royal, Canadians believe in the rule of law and they believe international law must prevail. They believe the United Nations was set up to avert war and to ensure that no country unilaterally would make a pre-emptive strike. There are countries of the world that have known real war. France, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom have seen war in the two great wars. They like no one else understand what war is. They are all anxious even at this moment to avert war because they know that war does not solve the problem. War is a temporary measure.

If we wish to seek democratic solutions, if we wish to ensure disarmament, we must find a way to do so with a threat of force, yes with force, but to find the kind of process where we set clear guidelines and ensure that we exhaust all the efforts we need to exhaust, under the United Nations, to bring Saddam Hussein to heel.

I want to close by saying that, as a Canadian, I believe our government will stand up and do the right thing. I believe that in the history of Canada we have always at the right moment come up with ideas that are worth following. I hope that all of us in the House will not take petty political positions. This is too big. This is not a hockey game. I watched the media following Iraq as if it were a hockey game. Let us see who will be the first one, let us see who will get out there and deke out whom on the ice. This will be a crisis of humanitarian proportions, if war is launched on Iraq. This will last for a long time because there will be retaliation from many countries. The Middle East will be plunged into something unimaginable. This war has long term consequences.

Finally we need, and I think Canada can lead in this, to let men and women of goodwill move forward and to come up at this last moment with decisions under the rule of law and with compromises that would set clear guidelines to avert what would seem right now, in my sense of despair, to be an inevitability.

• (2325)

Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the nations of the world are on the brink of choosing one of two sad roads. As I said in previous speeches, if the world goes to war, innocent people will die; if the world does not go to war, innocent people will die. The difficulty for each of us as politicians, and indeed for every citizen of the world in their own conscience, is which of these two sad roads we should take.

As chair of the foreign affairs caucus and member of Parliament responsible to express the views of my constituents in Yukon, it is important that I rise again for the fourth time, I believe, to talk about this very serious situation.

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I will start by commending my constituents who made their decisions of conscience one way or another. I commend the hundreds of them who wrote to me to express their desire for peace, their fear of war and the ramifications it would have. I commend those who led the peace march which I participated in and gave a speech at several months ago. I commend Will Petricko and the minister of the United Church in Whitehorse who organized an event at the church, upstairs and downstairs, both for prayer and to talk about ways to achieve peace.

Finally, I want to thank Will Petricko and other Yukoners who yesterday organized hundreds of Yukoners to light peace candles across the Yukon, in two locations in Whitehorse, in Dawson and in Haines Junction. I would like to say thank you to 10 year old Vicki at the vigil who said, "I would like to say peace to everyone here and peace to the world," and to 11 year old Jannel who said, "Peace is nothing but a dream waiting to come true".

Some of those who are so passionately worried may have said, God bless the Prime Minister, or at least they were very relieved when he said in his speech to the House of Commons today, to a standing ovation, that if military action proceeds without a new resolution of the Security Council, Canada will not participate.

This position by the Prime Minister, and those who applauded it, is one of significant courage. In some ways it takes at least as much courage to fight for peace as it does to go to war. It is certainly no easy event for any of us, to make a decision that may not be the most pleasing to our closest friend and ally, especially one that can have a great effect on the well-being of Canadian families, but a decision of courage it was.

It was also an expression of our sovereignty. The Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, many of my colleagues in the House and I have always made it clear that Canada will always make its own decisions. We always have and we always will.

Good friends have the ability to respect each other's different decisions and are still friends. In the *Winnipeg Free Press* on March 14 Ambassador Paul Cellucci described our relationship in the following terms:

The relationship that the United States has with Canada is our most important relationship in the world.

If you think about the impact in the day-to-day lives with U.S. citizens, no other relationship even comes close.

The relationship is in good shape. We're getting things done.

I respect the right of the few people who contacted me and felt that we should stand again by our friend and neighbour in renouncing the dictator who has murdered millions. Make no mistake about Saddam Hussein. He gassed 60,000 of his own people. He used weapons of mass destruction and murdered thousands of his own people in prisons and torture chambers. He caused a million Iranians to be killed or injured in war. The world will be a better place when Saddam Hussein is gone.

To put some context on the situation where often violence, murder and upset in the Middle East occurs, we remember that the Arab Muslim world in recent decades and centuries has had much pressure and upheaval.

● (2330)

Other religions have invaded from the west. Other religions different from theirs have taken some control over their lives, their regions or their neighbourhoods. At the same time some of their governments that have been created are dictatorial and do not espouse the common themes of peace and justice in their own religion.

It makes it even easier for some of the dictators to survive when their regimes are funded by western civilizations through the purchase of their oil. They do not need to go to their people through democratic elections to get the views of the people. They can hold this dictatorial power and perform acts that no citizen of any nation would be proud of.

Over the last few centuries one of the solutions that has arisen is a philosophy that they should return to the traditional, very extreme religious values to the exclusion of all others. Unfortunately some of the solutions to make that return would be through violence and terrorism. Those efforts have not been that successful to overthrow the secular, dictatorial regimes. Therefore perhaps some of them, such as al-Qaeda, have turned to another solution which is to make the western countries so angry that they would intrude into the area even more than they are now, causing the people, who are now peaceful or are now middle of the road and not our enemies, to rise up with the fundamental terrorists and become strong enough to overthrow those countries.

In this context I want to outline the reasons for my own decision and personal views in this particular situation. In politics, perception is reality. These events, the invading of Iraq, have to be perceived with the proper evidence. They have to be perceived by the hundreds of millions of Muslim people around the world and in the Arab world, many of whom do not understand that there is a clear and present danger that would require military force at this time.

If someone asked me to go to war, to invade because of specific dangers, for example weapons of mass destruction, I would need the existing evidence clearly outlined to me. It would need to be sufficient enough to convince me that a state is powerful enough to be a danger to us, that it has the means to endanger us and that it is not presently contained. I have not yet been convinced. I do not believe the inspectors are convinced and certainly the United Nations has not been convinced as a result of the resolution that the members of the Security Council have not yet passed.

I would like to speak for a moment in defence of the United Nations. There are some who are suggesting that this is not the United Nations' finest hour and in fact that it is becoming weak and irrelevant. I have to totally disagree with that.

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As Winston Churchill said, democracy is a terrible form of government, but it is the best we have. In the same sense the United Nations is not perfect. It has made some dramatic mistakes in the past, but it has also done a tremendous amount of good. We should never stop trying to improve the United Nations. For example, people specifically refer to the Security Council with the veto of five members, which is why I am happy that Canada left its options open to the very last moment.

• (2335)

Had any of those five nations that have a veto exercised that veto in an unreasonable way, that would have dictated Canada's foreign policy. As I said earlier, Canada is always going to make its own decisions. We are not going to leave it up to other nations.

During this whole debate the United Nations has been at the forefront. The issue has been discussed day in and day out. The United States has been going to the United Nations. All the nations have been looking to it. The media over the last months and years have been focused around the United Nations. It has been the centre of activity to try to find a solution to a very difficult problem. If some nations act before the United Nations does, it does not mean the United Nations has failed. It means that those nations have made other decisions than what the United Nations has made.

The United Nations is made up of the member nations of the world. Those member nations in the United Nations have not been convinced that there is enough evidence and enough reason to embark on military force at this time.

Another reason for my own personal decision is related to innocent civilians in Iraq and innocent civilians and soldiers in neighbouring countries. I do not think anyone would argue the fact that Iraq would be a better place without Saddam Hussein, but exactly how does one do that? What does one do when the troops are surrounding Baghdad, a city full of millions of innocent people? How does one cause a change of a few people who are holding that horrendous dictatorial regime in place without the murder of many more innocent people?

Some of the other reasons upon which I based my decision relate to the ramifications of this, because it is not simply an attack on one palace, one country, or even one region. There are ramifications for the hundreds of millions of Muslims in the many Arab nations. The very complex interaction of religions and politics will have a much wider effect on the world and we have to view that effect. Simply, the fact is that going to war has a tremendous economic impact on all those nations. How many poor people will die in all the countries involved in a war, including the United States, because of lack of funds to feed the poor or fund health care systems?

A war will also, in my opinion, weaken the war on terrorism. The war on terrorism, that the Minister of Foreign Affairs so eloquently outlined today in which we are hand in hand fighting with the United States, is far from won. The terrorists we are fighting are not armies in specific regions; they are people who live in the apartment next door. They are very hard to detect. The goodwill and efforts of many nations around the world are needed to defeat them because they proliferate in virtually every nation on earth.

Some of the nations that are on our side, that are our allies right now, are helping us root out the terrorists. However, they are in very tenuous situations and on the verge of threat from fundamentalists. As I said earlier when talking about the history of the Arab Muslim world, they could be easily aroused by more incursions of the west.

If there is not sufficient rationale this could simply antagonize those people and give enough force to the fundamentalists trying to destabilize those governments. It could cause an overthrow in many nations that we depend on in the fight against terrorism. That would leave those nations as protectorates of the cells of terrorism where they could brainwash, train, arm and equip those small groups of people who live in that apartment next door to set off bombs and commit other terrorist activities in areas where peaceful families live, such as in North America.

Other reasons for my personal decision are the discussions I had with ambassadors or people knowing their positions in all the countries around Iraq.

• (2340)

Some countries, as members know, such as Iran and Kuwait, have been attacked by Iraq. These countries, out of them all, should be the most fearful of Iraq and its potential for weapons of mass destruction, especially since Iraq's missiles at the moment are very short range and can go no farther than the adjacent countries.

Not one of the ambassadors with whom I discussed this felt that military action was an appropriate solution to the situation at this time. If the people who are most threatened and who are the closest do not feel this is the way to solve the problem of Saddam Hussein, then Canada, a large ocean away, cannot see this as a clear and present danger.

When we upset a regime it is not simple to replace it with a perfect, or democratic, or better regime. One person does not stay in power in a country on his or her own. There must be support for the person. It is very complex to rebuild a nation, especially one with so many forces.

Iraq was never a unified country in the first place. What happens with a destabilization of the system and the collaboration of the Shi'ites in southern Iraq and in Iran? What happens with the tensions of the Kurds in northern Iraq and Turkey? What happens in the very scary situation of Israel and Palestine which many people believe have caused much of the dissent in the Middle East and many of the terror attacks that have resulted in the murder of people?

In the veil of a war against Iraq, what could happen in the Palestine-Israeli conflict? More individuals could be killed under the veil of this other threat and people would not even notice it. It could also accelerate to an extent that Israel gets involved in the complex inter-relationship. All sorts of nations are involved now in a horrendous conflict. It has spread far beyond the borders of removing one dictator.

This should be a happy day. We have made a sovereign decision that will make many Canadians happy. Without another United Nations resolution we will not participate in this particular war. However, innocent people will continue to die in Iraq while this regime is still in place and innocent people will die when this regime is removed. It is not a happy day in that respect.

What we need to do now is to look for solutions to remove all the causes of violence in the Middle East so that things like this will not occur in the future and that terrorism, which we are also fighting at this time, will not occur in the future.

We need to intensify our efforts to support education in the area. We need to intensify our humanitarian support. We need to work on the belief that we have, both at home and abroad in those nations, for religious tolerance and understanding, an understanding of the history that the people in those nations have been through.

We need to help build a world where the people in those countries can regain the pride they have lost, the pride in their citizenship that will allow them to stand up and create governments for which they can be proud.

If we do all of that, we will improve the lives of people in those areas and the world will be a better place for all of us, especially a world that is so connected that if something happens it happens to all of us.

● (2345)

As John Donne, a famous British parliamentarian and poet, said, which describes any deaths, any unrest or any unhappiness that occurs in the area, in referring to each of us:

Ask not for whom the bell tolls,
It tolls for thee.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am not pleased to rise to debate this matter. I do not think any of us are pleased that this matter has come before the world and our Parliament.

I am particularly displeased with the form in which debate occurs in this place and the lack of seriousness with which the government treats it. I compare unfavourably the nature of the cabinet's regard for Parliament in this critical matter with that exemplified in the mother Parliament at Westminster where, over the past months, the senior members of the Queen's ministry have appeared repeatedly before a full and anxious House of Commons to report in detail on the progress, or lack thereof, of diplomacy as it relates to the situation in Iraq.

The right hon. Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, the foreign secretary and the defence minister, week after week, appeared before a fully active and deeply interested House of Commons offering detailed statements on positions of the British government and opening the House to extended periods of question and debate where thoughtful and informed positions were being taken on all sides of that House. I compare that unfavourably with this place here tonight where—and I will not mention the absence or presence of members—senior members of the ministry have not even deigned to come before the House and explain in any detail the position of the government, why and how it arrived at that position, what it

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regards as the consequences of that position for Canada's standing in the world, for our bilateral relations with the United States and for the benighted people of Iraq. We have no opportunity to have an extended and meaningful discussion on any of those points.

Instead, today, after months of prevarication and constant efforts to sit firmly on the fence, the Prime Minister finally revealed a position on the part of his government in the form of a 35 second statement read out during question period.

Just at the outset, I am normally not preoccupied by matters of process but I want to place firmly on the record my great disappointment with the lack of gravity with which this matter has been treated by the government in Parliament.

I am further disappointed and I would say, frankly, ashamed, although I do not often say that, but I am ashamed in some ways to be a Canadian today, to live in a country with a government, in one of the great moments of statecraft and on one of the great and most important questions of international security at the beginning of this century, that has decided to cop out, and has decided that indifference and inaction constitute an adequate response in the face of a gross, ongoing and dangerous violation of international law, a brooding threat to international security and a monstrous violation of international human rights standards, which is the fascist regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

Let us briefly review, as I know others have, the history of this matter as it relates in particular to the United Nations, because it is on that and its authority that the Prime Minister apparently has finally established some sort of position.

In 1990 Iraq illegally and aggressively invaded its peaceful and neighbouring country of Kuwait. The United Nations responded with resolutions 678, 686, 687 and 688 in which it required immediate Iraqi removal from the sovereign state of Kuwait. Of course the Security Council in those resolutions authorized with virtual unanimity, Yemen being the sole no vote, a military action of that nature.

● (2350)

Iraq was removed by force, which is characteristic of the only means which Saddam Hussein seems to understand, and the United Nations gave him, in a ceasefire agreement which was ratified by UNSCR 687, a 15 day timeline to report and destroy all of his illegal weapons in his armament of mass destruction. At the time when this undertaking was given by him, not simply demanded by the international community but given by him as condition precedent for the cessation of hostile activities, which had been authorized by the Security Council, the international community in fact had no idea about the depth and breadth of the illegal Iraqi arsenal. In many respects, we still were innocent to the depth of the horror his regime had represented for his people for the two preceding decades.

So the UN placed this obligation on him and he accepted in an undertaking, in a ceasefire to illegal military action, which he had commenced through an act of aggression, 15 days to disarm. Today we are 4,300 days later. It is 12 years since that undertaking in a ceasefire agreement for a 15 day period of disarmament.

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We are 4,300 days and 16 United Nations Security Council resolutions later, most of them unanimous, 4,300 days and countless efforts at diplomatic resolutions, 4,300 days during which time, as we know, UNSCOM inspectors generally were unsuccessful at finding illegal Iraqi arsenals unless and until there were defectors who left that fascist regime, such as Saddam Hussein's son-in-law in 1995, to report on the illegal weapons that were being hidden. We are 4,300 days later and during that time the IAEA declared in the mid-1990s that Iraq had no discernable nuclear weapons program until Saddam Hussein's son-in-law defected and reported that indeed there was one. He returned, of course, and was fed to wild and rabid dogs in an act of brutality typical of that dictator.

Then we returned with another set of UN weapons inspectors in UNSCOM in the late 1980s. The Iraqi regime again refused and failed to cooperate, so the civilized world again threatened force, which was manifested in Operation Desert Fox, supported by the Liberal government, I might add, without explicit UN authorization. Then the world went back to its holiday from history and wanted to believe that containment, an occasional military action, and a brutal sanctions regime which has caused the unnecessary deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis were adequate policies to face a dangerous, hostile dictator in violation of countless UN resolutions, in violation of the express will of the international community. That has been the policy of this and other governments, roughly since Operation Desert Fox of 1998.

However, some of our allies, foremost among them, of course, the United States and the United Kingdom, realized that on September 11, 2001, our holiday from history ended. They realized that there are forces of evil, yes, a word which I know that in the politically correct lexicon of modern liberalism one is not permitted to utter, but evil nevertheless. People dedicated to destruction, dedicated to killing innocent civilians, indeed, dedicated to the downfall of all of western civilization and liberal democracy, unleashed untold violence against civilians simply because they were Americans or lived in the United States.

● (2355)

It dawned on the world's leaders clearly that the prospect of marrying that kind of Islamo-fascist terrorist violence with weapons of mass destruction created and fed by rogue regimes, weapons having no return address, for which deterrence and containment do not suffice as a policy of control, that such weapons falling into the hands of violent terrorists would inevitably be used in a mass way against civilian populations in the western world.

The United States learned that lesson clearly, understanding the implications of September 11. The United Kingdom, standing up to its historic tradition of responsibility in enforcing international law, understood that clearly. Australia came to understand the threat posed by the marriage of this new rabid form of terrorism with weapons of mass destruction when it lost 200 civilians at Bali months ago. But for some reason, Canada seems not yet to have learned this new lesson from the new history of the 21st century.

The Prime Minister will argue, and apparently has, that military action about to be undertaken by our traditional and historic allies lies somehow outside the ambit of international law. I say nonsense, and I refer to nothing less than himself as an authority.

Let me go through his record. In this place in 1990, when UN Security Council resolutions had overwhelmingly been adopted, authorizing the use of force to expel Saddam's army from Kuwait, the then leader of the opposition and current Prime Minister stood in this place and opposed the UN-sanctioned use of force to ensure international peace and security. He opposed the UN mandate at that time.

Eventually, when he saw that public opinion was running in favour of force rather than appeasement in the face of an aggressive dictator's invasion, he modified his position to say that while he was not opposed to the use of force, he did not want Canada to contribute to it. While he was not opposed to the placement of Canadian Forces in that region, he did not want them to actually be engaged in military activity. That was the respect he showed for the United Nations resolutions at that time.

Then let us fast forward to, as I mentioned earlier, Operation Desert Fox, where the United States and the United Kingdom realized that Saddam was not cooperating with the UNSCOM regime in the mid-1990s and threatened military action. The Prime Minister at the time stood in this place and categorically—

● (0000)

The Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member for Calgary Southeast in full flight, but it being midnight, the debate has come to an end and I have to declare the motion to adjourn the House carried. Accordingly, despite my reluctance in interrupting the hon. member, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12 a.m.)

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