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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, March 10, 2004

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, March 10, 2004

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

[*English*]

The Speaker: As is our practice on Wednesday we will now sing O Canada, and we will be led by the hon. member for Saint John.

[*Editor's Note: Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1405)

[*English*]

ERNEST GEORGE COTTREAU

Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 7, the riding of West Nova and Canada lost a respected family man, community member and parliamentarian.

A native of Wedgeport, Nova Scotia, Ernest George Cottreau had a distinguished career in education, business and politics.

Among his many accomplishments, Mr. Cottreau was owner and operator of Baker Motors, principal of Sainte-Anne-du-Ruisseau Consolidated School, and an active member of the Yarmouth community for many years.

A lifelong Liberal, Mr. Cottreau brought a keen interest and dedication to local and provincial politics, serving on various committees and associations.

Ernest Cottreau was appointed to the Senate of Canada in 1974, where he earned the respect of colleagues on both sides of the chamber.

It is with admiration that we remember the life and accomplishments of this great Canadian. Adieu, Senator Cottreau.

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CANADIAN FORCES

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week the Canadian Forces ombudsman reported that the government had insisted that 10 soldiers pay back close to \$30,000 they had received in meal allowances.

We have now learned that the Department of National Defence was swindled out of \$90 million by phony invoices. Although an investigation is currently ongoing, sources suggest the DND paid the money to a computer contract for goods and services it never received.

The \$90 million is almost as much as was blown in the \$100 million sponsorship scandal uncovered by the Auditor General.

How is it that the government can pinch pennies when it comes to meal allowances for soldiers but it cannot keep track of \$90 million worth of computer services? How can \$90 million disappear into a black hole, when our military is strapped for cash?

How can this government account for the fact that it is ruthless in seizing \$30,000 from soldiers but it cannot seem to get \$90 million from contractors who produced nothing for DND?

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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Sophia Leung (Vancouver Kingsway, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians celebrated International Women's Day on March 8. This day was established by the United Nations in 1977 to recognize the achievements of women.

This year the Government of Canada has decided on the theme of "She's on a Role". Our government is promoting a full week of activities to celebrate women's leadership from Vancouver to St. John's. This is an important week for all Canadians to recognize the achievements of women for their strong leadership in Canada.

However we also learned from a recent report of the Canadian Council of Social Development that 10.5% of immigrant women of visible minority have experienced emotional and financial mistreatment in Canada. These women victims usually lack personal and social support in a new country.

* * *

YORKTOWN FAMILY SERVICES HUMANITARIAN AWARD

Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Charlie Coffey, who on March 2, 2004, was honoured in Toronto as the recipient of the 2004 Yorktown Family Services Humanitarian Award. This award recognizes and celebrates the outstanding contributions and dedication by an individual to improving the lives of people in the community.

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While in his daily job Charlie Coffey leads government relations and community affairs for RBC Financial Group, throughout his career he has made community leadership a priority. He especially enjoys interacting with young people, entrepreneurs and aboriginal peoples.

His commitments include: co-chair, Commission on Early Learning and Child Care for the City of Toronto; co-chair, Champions; governor of the Canadian Council to Promote Equality and Respect and the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Council of Canada.

In the past, Charlie has been named as an honorary chief for his support of first nations. As well, he has received the Canadian Women's International Business Initiative Award.

I ask everyone to join me in congratulating Mr. Coffey.

* * *

• (1410)

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Secretary General of the United Nations, His Excellency Kofi Annan, gave a speech to this Parliament in which he reminded us of the important role Canada has played and continues to play within the UN.

He reminded us of the millennium development goals, including substantial poverty reduction by 2015, as well as the NPAD, a Canadian initiative adopted at the Kananaskis Summit of the G-8. We must, however, pick up the pace in international development. He used the example of the need to provide more help to the neediest countries, such as Haiti.

As Chair of the Canadian section of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas, I wholeheartedly support the comments of the Secretary General who asked that Canada, already on the right path, provide even more assistance to the people of Haiti in these most difficult times.

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[*English*]

SUMAS 2 POWER PROJECT

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, CPC): Mr. Speaker, residents of the Fraser Valley in British Columbia achieved a victory last week. The National Energy Board announced it will not allow the power lines needed for Sumas 2 energy plant just south of the Canadian border.

As an intervenor against SE2, I have heard from thousands of my constituents who oppose the project because it would spew 2.5 tonnes of pollutants per day into our already stressed air shed in the Fraser Valley.

Despite years and years of public appeals, personal interventions and questions in this House, the environment minister still has no understanding of the devastation that SE2 would cause for Fraser Valley residents. He has done nothing to oppose its plans. In fact, SE2 used his comments to support its air-polluting plant.

Thanks to my Conservative colleagues and the thousands and thousands of British Columbians who have fought this for years, together, we have achieved a victory in the battle for clean air in the Fraser Valley.

* * *

[*Translation*]

RAI INTERNATIONAL

Hon. Yvon Charbonneau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to echo the demand by the Italian-speaking community in my riding and in other regions of Quebec—some 250,000 people—to have access to the Italian television network known as RAI International.

Italian television is accessible throughout the world, but not in Canada, because of an agreement with a Toronto company called Telelatino, which, it appears, holds the rights to broadcast a number of hours of RAI International programming. The Italian-speaking community is furious, and rightly so; the situation is currently before the CRTC.

During the CRTC consultation process, this request has received more than 344 favourable comments. Presentations in favour of RAI International have included a letter-writing campaign and a huge petition containing over 100,000 signatures.

I hope that common sense will prevail in this matter. As I have for months, I continue to support this legitimate request from the Italian-speaking community.

* * *

ATKINS & FRÈRES

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Matapédia—Matane, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to pay tribute to Atkins & Frères, a company in my riding that recently won the national Renaud-Cyr award in the Artisan category.

This is a national merit award for the restaurant and food industry in recognition of a company that has made a remarkable contribution to Quebec gastronomy. The national merit awards are one of the five major events for the bio-food industry in Quebec.

Located in Mont-Louis, Atkins & Frères has built its reputation on its seafood products and traditional smoking processes, and has helped put the Gaspé Peninsula and the Lower St. Lawrence on the national gastronomic map.

This award is proof of the abundance of fine foods waiting to be discovered in the Gaspé Peninsula and the Lower St. Lawrence region.

I want to congratulate Atkins & Frères for winning this award and for helping make the bounties of our region better known.

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[*English*]

CKCO TELEVISION

Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member of Parliament for Kitchener—Waterloo, it gives me great pleasure to recognize the 50th anniversary of CKCO Television, our local CTV station.

A pioneer in Canadian television, CKCO started its first broadcast on March 1, 1954. It was the third private television station on air in Canada. At that time there were only about 3,000 television sets owned by the 65,000 people in Kitchener—Waterloo.

Since those chaotic first days of live programming, CKCO has grown. It plays an integral part in keeping our community well informed and entertained.

CKCO provides the Waterloo region with up to the minute information on local sports and services, cultural, religious, ethnic and community events. It is a visual local media centre for all that is important and relevant to our lives.

I want to extend my congratulations to CKCO on its golden jubilee and best wishes.

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• (1415)

PICTOU CAREER RESOURCE CENTRE

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I call on the federal government to reconsider its decision to allow the Pictou Career Resource Centre to close at the end of the month.

It is a grave misjudgment to close the Pictou Career Resource Centre, a critical resource in helping constituents secure gainful employment.

These services are being withdrawn from a region ranked among the top 39 Canadian centres to do business. Yet Pictou County workers are being denied services that would help them benefit from this strong business environment.

The services and resources offered at the centre are critical to encouraging people to take a proactive approach to their employment searches and to building a strong economy in that community.

The centre offers a range of services to help people become job ready: assistance with writing résumés and cover letters; effective job interview strategies; and the use of computers and online job banks.

Removing these resources and the valuable staff who deliver them is a real negative blow to local economic and skills development in Pictou County.

The human resource centre should remain open. I call upon the human resources minister to rescind and revisit these closure plans.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Hon. Gurbax Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton—Springdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada has undertaken many initiatives in recent years to address the social, economic and health aspects of women as individuals, paid workers and parents, reflecting its commitment to gender equality.

Economically speaking, the Government of Canada increased investment in the Canada child tax benefit to \$9 billion by 2004. In the area of health, the Government of Canada launched Health Canada's women's health strategy. To contend with issues of

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violence, the Government of Canada committed \$32 million annually to a national crime prevention initiative and \$7 million annually to the family violence initiative.

There is still much work to be done. Yet, it is good to know that under the Government of Canada we are making great strides in areas of federal accomplishments toward equality for women, women's human rights, issues of violence against women, and economic well-being affecting women.

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CANADIAN NATIONAL

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the strike at Canadian National is about many issues, but ultimately it is about the attitude of an American led management team that is contemptuous of its own workforce and Canadian values. This disrespect has taken a new and nasty turn in the community of Transcona where CN is now using the strike as cover for closing down the midway or street that runs through the CN shops, which has been used by the public since 1909.

I am told that yesterday a young man was arrested, handcuffed and charged for using the midway. Shame on CN and shame on the government for its indifference to the way that Hunter Harrison and his paramilitary managers are treating railroaders, strikebreaking with American imports and now abusing the people of Transcona.

A truly Canadian government would step in and tell CN to show more respect, open the midway, send the American scabs back where they came from and go to the table with a new and decent proposal.

* * *

[Translation]

HOCKEY

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the savage attack during Monday night's NHL game is reprehensible and proof that hockey truly does have a culture of violence. Checking by players is increasingly violent and only serves to further damage hockey's image.

What is worse, however, are the consequences that this can have on our young amateur players. How can they not identify with their idols and not attempt similar unjustified attacks?

Although the player responsible for the attack, Todd Bertuzzi, was suspended indefinitely and could face criminal charges, NHL executives will have to take the necessary measures to change this culture of gratuitous and retaliatory violence, which has no place on the ice or anywhere else. Given the seriousness of his actions, this player deserves a punishment that will serve as an example to others, thereby sending a clear message and putting a stop to this culture of violence before something worse happens.

Hockey needs to be played the way it used to be, with a real code of honour.

*Oral Questions***ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

Ms. Diane St-Jacques (Shefford, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to be able to tell you about an absolutely exceptional Internet site that was created by citizens in the riding of Shefford. Jereussis.com is a virtual gateway to learning.

Its designers recognize that every student is unique and, with this site, give students an opportunity to develop that unique potential. Their mission is to encourage academic success by providing French-speaking secondary school students in Canada with an opportunity for better student-teacher interaction.

Their mandate: to optimize learning opportunities through an innovative concept of academic assistance through both virtual and real contact. This project was made possible by a grant from the Industry Canada SchoolNet program.

Congratulations to Micheline Émond and all her Jereussis.com team. They have understood that success builds confidence and self-esteem, and academic success means involvement and an upbeat attitude.

* * *

• (1420)

[English]

STREET RACING

Mr. Chuck Cadman (Surrey North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here we go again. Yesterday in Surrey, B.C. just before the evening rush hour, an 18-year-old lost control of his muscle car at an estimated speed of 140 kilometres per hour. He demolished a bus shelter, critically injuring a 71-year-old woman. Another car was spotted fleeing the scene, making it obvious to all concerned that this was yet another tragic result of a street race.

As warmer weather approaches, street racing incidents will likely increase and participants are confident they will not spend a day in jail even if they kill or injure. Nationally, insurance claims resulting from street racing more than doubled between 2000 and 2002. A message must be sent to the courts that these crimes are to be treated more seriously.

I urge all members to maintain support for Bill C-338, which the House passed and sent to the justice committee. It will make street racing an aggravating factor for sentencing. If we are really serious about deterring this irresponsible criminal activity, Bill C-338 must become law before the end of this Parliament.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Hon. Grant Hill (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister yesterday studiously avoided some straightforward questions so I am going to try again today.

In 1998 members of his cabinet met with Groupaction to discuss the Liberal ad scam. My question is pretty straightforward. Which ministers in his cabinet today were at that meeting?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has already indicated that upon receipt of a proper motion from the committee in question, all of that documentation will be available and all the information the hon. member seeks will be made available.

Hon. Grant Hill (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was not that tough to answer that question. I could ask it again but I suppose it would be a waste of time in question period. Let me try another angle on this question.

The Prime Minister appointed individuals to his cabinet not so long ago, in December, in fact. Was he aware that those individuals whom he appointed to this cabinet today were at that meeting chaired by Gagliano?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member is asking, did I ask members of the cabinet if they attended every single meeting and checked all 300 meetings that might have been taken over the last little while, the answer is no.

What I did was to ask every single potential member of cabinet. They were asked by an independent group at the time that they became members of cabinet if they had anything that they wanted to declare that might have any reflection on their background. I also then put the question to the full cabinet. I did that this year. In both cases I am delighted to say that cabinet responded appropriately.

Hon. Grant Hill (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Once again, Mr. Speaker, there is no answer to this very straightforward question. Let us try again.

In 1996 the current Deputy Prime Minister was part of a Treasury Board meeting that discussed the forerunner of the sponsorship program. An audit had already warned of abuses. She okayed a scheme that increased the budget while removing all the reporting requirements. Once again, did the Prime Minister know about that when he brought her into his current cabinet?

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there has been an enormous amount of discussion about this issue and the changes that took place in the oversight and the policies of the Treasury Board over time, some of which led to a reduction in comptrollership, which is one of the reasons the Prime Minister has been so insistent that we build a modern comptroller-ship program. It is one of the things he has tasked me with.

If the member has a specific allegation to make about somebody committing a criminal act or some wrongdoing, make it.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister was in fact intimately involved with the various cabinet committees linked to the sponsorship scandal from the very beginning. She was in the loop and perhaps the tie that binds. In 1995, she was a member of the unity committee; in 1998, a member of the ad hoc committee on government communications; in 2001, an official member of the communications committee.

Oral Questions

Will the Deputy Prime Minister admit that she was not only in the know but was in fact the common thread in the elimination of controls and safeguards and boosting up spending into the contract scam?

•(1425)

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is hitting new lows. That is sheer and absolute nonsense.

If the question is, was the Deputy Prime Minister an outstanding minister of energy, the answer is yes. If the question is, was she an outstanding Minister of Justice, the answer is yes. If the question is, was she an outstanding Minister of Health, the answer is yes. If the question is, is she an outstanding Deputy Prime Minister, the answer is yes.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, CPC): Mr. Speaker, was the Prime Minister avoiding the question? Yes. Was the Deputy Prime Minister involved in this ad scam? Yes.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: It is Wednesday and I realize there is a lot of enthusiasm but the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, I think, was trying to ask a question. I was unable to hear a word he said despite a loud voice.

Perhaps we could have a little order and hear the hon. member pose a question.

Mr. Peter MacKay: Let us go over the chronology again, Mr. Speaker.

As a member of the Treasury Board cabinet committee in 1996, the Deputy Prime Minister approved the cancellation of contract reporting requirements. In 1998 she was at the Groupaction meeting. In 1998 to 2003, she sat on the communications committee. The deputy chef was in the kitchen and helped cook this poison.

Was the Prime Minister's plan to keep his—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the opposition members are getting pretty desperate when all they do is simply ask if a minister went to a meeting and as a result from that draw all kinds of innuendo that cannot be justified.

If there is any member in the House who ought not to talk about poison, it is this member and what he did to his party.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in an interview on RDI, Alfonso Gagliano explained that the funding for the entire sponsorship scandal came from the national unity envelope in the Prime Minister's budget.

Since the national unity fund comes under the Prime Minister's responsibility, will the present Prime Minister admit that what led to the worst abuses in the sponsorship scandal—and I am asking this of the Prime Minister because those are his words—the political direction came directly from—

The Speaker: The Hon. Minister of Public Works and Government Services.

[*English*]

Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have established in the House as well as in other places that many of the activities funded from the unity fund, through the sponsorship program, were extremely important community events.

We have also established that many members, from all sides of the House, recommended festivities, festivals and activities in their constituencies which were important and required funding.

What went wrong is what our various inquiries are looking into, including the special counsel whose terms of reference I have released in a news release just before the House met.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in response to an access to information request, the Department of Finance informs us that it is not responsible for the national unity fund. The former Treasury Board secretary just told the Standing Committee on Public Accounts that it is not his responsibility either. But Alfonso Gagliano states categorically that the money came from the national unity envelope, and that is under the control of the Prime Minister.

Will the Prime Minister, who is always talking about transparency, stand up and clearly admit that the person dishing out public funds in the sponsorship scandal was Jean Chrétien?

•(1430)

[*English*]

Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all I can repeat is that there were worthwhile activities that were funded across the country in all of our constituencies or most of them. We also know that members from all sides of the House made representations on behalf of activities in their communities for these funds.

What we do know as well is that money went missing, is unaccounted for, when it was being transmitted from the government to these activities. That is what the special counsel is looking into. All 721 files are being investigated to find out whether money went astray and if so, to recover it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, his predecessor, Alfonso Gagliano, admitted that the Prime Minister's fund is completely out of his hands; that is his excuse. The same must be true for this minister.

The Prime Minister's national unity fund still exists and, with a nod from the Prime Minister, could be used again for similar purposes and in the same way.

Will the Prime Minister tell this House what use he has made of the national unity fund since he took office?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, the answer to the question is: none. I have not used it.

In terms of the other issue, I am very proud to say that Jean Chrétien always worked for Canadian unity.

Oral Questions

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, those listening and the members of this House will note the shift in the Prime Minister's position. A few weeks ago, he condemned what happened; now, he condones it.

The Prime Minister said he was prepared to make public any document that could shed light on this sinister affair.

Will the Prime Minister agree to make public the documents that track the use of the Prime Minister's national unity fund since 1993? Therein lies the key to solving the mystery.

[English]

Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has made clear and in fact the activities of government have followed through producing documents requested by specific resolution of the public accounts committee.

The Prime Minister has said again that any documents related to the Auditor General's report requested by the public accounts committee or requested by the public inquiry would be made available to those processes in a due process that does not simply open the books of the Privy Council to any question that might come from the media or any member of the opposition.

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the House would be less preoccupied with this issue if the public inquiry that the Prime Minister called was up and running, but it is not. It is now over a month and there is still no public inquiry underway.

My question is for the Prime Minister. We have been told that Judge Gomery has been on vacation for the last three or four weeks. Is this true? And if so, why did the government not pick somebody who could get down to business right away?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Judge Gomery has set in motion all of the work. The hon. member will understand that an enormous amount of work has to be done by investigative counsel in preparing the investigation. All of that is ongoing.

In fact, I would suspect that this particular inquiry will be up and running faster than almost any others we have seen.

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PUBLIC SERVICE

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the House will note that there was no denial of the issue that I raised. It beats me why the government could not have found somebody else who was ready to take this on right away.

One of the other things that is being delayed, which if it was forthcoming we might be able to deal with in a more confident manner, is the whole issue of whistleblower legislation. There is still no whistleblower legislation being laid on the table by the government so that people who do want to come forward can come forward with some confidence knowing that the government is committed to the concept.

When will we see that?

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Minister responsible for la Francophonie and Minister responsible for the Office of Indian Residential Schools Resolution, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not only is our government committed to the whistleblower legislation, but we are currently at the cabinet stage of the process. We expect to be putting it forward as soon as possible. We have already pledged to have it tabled by March 31.

* * *

[English]

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has broken his promise to Canadians to disband Communications Canada, the home of the corrupt sponsorship program. Instead of scrapping it, he has moved it. He has gone behind their backs and moved it to the Privy Council, even closer under his nose. The Prime Minister has betrayed the trust of Canadians.

Why has he broken his promise to dissolve and disband Communications Canada?

• (1435)

Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's and the government's resolution was to disband Communications Canada by March 31. In that process, the sponsorship program, which was a large part of Communications Canada, was cancelled immediately.

What is in place now is a plan to take the various aspects of Communications Canada which are important to Canadians, such as 1-800 O-Canada, which is greatly used; the Canada website, which is respected around the world; and the regional operations of Communications Canada—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lakeland.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, CPC): No, Mr. Speaker. The facts are that the Prime Minister told Canadians the sponsorship program was gone and then he moved it to Heritage Canada. Then he told Canadians that Communications Canada was being scrapped and he moved it into the Privy Council Office. How underhanded.

The Prime Minister has said one thing and done another. Why has the Prime Minister moved the money from the sponsorship program into the Privy Council?

Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is being preciously economical with the truth. The fact is that the Prime Minister said that Communications Canada would be shut down and dismantled by March 31, and that will happen.

The Prime Minister said on December 13 that the sponsorship program would be cancelled immediately, and it was. The responsibility to fund local community activities, which rested previously in Heritage Canada, will continue that role with the same budget.

Oral Questions

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, cabinet documents show that the President of the Privy Council tried to get advertising money with no contract, no paperwork, just based on “I told these guys they would get money, so give it to them”. The minister knew that broke the rules to protect the public purse. Now the Prime Minister has gone behind the backs of Canadians and moved the advertising program into the Privy Council Office.

Why has the Prime Minister given control of all this money to someone who the documents show is a rule breaker?

Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is incorrect.

The advertising function stays with Public Works and Government Services. We now have a new agency of record competition, which will be concluded within weeks, to chose a new agency of record to handle advertising through Public Works, not through Communications Canada but directly through Public Works. That is not being shut down.

Surely hon. members would all understand that government projects for the benefit of Canadians should be properly brought to the attention of Canadians. That is what advertising is for.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this game of Liberal musical chairs is not fooling anybody.

The Prime Minister told the House that none of his cabinet knew of any inappropriate activity in the sponsorship program, but now cabinet documents show that the President of the Privy Council tried to get sponsorship money in a way that broke the rules. Is that not inappropriate?

The Prime Minister then put this tainted minister in charge of the program that the Prime Minister promised to cancel. Is the Prime Minister saying this is the Liberal idea of cleaning house?

Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is mentioning a number of people and a number of positions. It is not exactly clear who she is talking about.

If she is talking about advertising done by the Government of Canada so that Canadians can have the proper information about government services to which they are entitled, that advertising responsibility is within the Minister of Public Works and Government Services.

It has been totally rectified taking into account all of the comments of the Auditor General. It is up and working. A new agency of record will be appointed within weeks.

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[*Translation*]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while the Minister for International Trade is asking Quebec and the provinces to make concessions to the Americans in the matter of softwood lumber, the president of Tembec, on the basis of the many rulings in Canada's favour, is encouraging them to continue fighting for a return to free trade.

Does the government realize that softwood lumber producers must have its concrete support in their struggle, rather than watching it bow and scrape to the U.S.?

● (1440)

[*English*]

Hon. John Harvard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the hon. member that when it comes to resolving the softwood lumber dispute, that is the number one priority of this minister. In fact, it is his major preoccupation. After all, he has a high regard for all the stakeholders in the industry including the workers and the communities.

We want members to know that the minister has a two track policy: litigation through the WTO and NAFTA, and negotiations. The ultimate goal is free trade. American consumers, after all, want our softwood lumber.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what is the minister waiting for, then, to introduce a real aid package that would provide loan guarantees to businesses and open up employment insurance to the workers affected by the crisis, as the Bloc Québécois has been proposing for months?

[*English*]

Hon. John Harvard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should know that there has been assistance provided. In fact, the last time I checked, the assistance was in excess of \$350 million.

I also want to remind the hon. member that the minister has been preoccupied with this issue ever since he became the minister back in December. He has travelled from one end of the country to the other and has held meetings with all the stakeholders. This is his number one priority. He is committed to it and we are seeking a settlement as soon as possible.

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[*Translation*]

CANADIEN NATIONAL RAILWAY

Ms. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the 5,000 or so Canadian National employees who have been striking for 20 days now have joined the already numerous victims of the Canada Labour Code, which does not protect workers against the use of scabs.

Does the government think it is right that CN should use all kinds of strategies, including, according to the union, the hiring of American replacement workers to counter the strike action by workers?

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is not a matter of scabs taking jobs from workers who are on strike.

Yes, other workers have been used to continue providing services to customers, but they are company officers. To date, there is nothing to support the member's accusation and allegations.

Oral Questions

Ms. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, does the Prime Minister not see the situation at CN as one more reason to amend the Canada Labour Code to include anti-scab provisions to better protect workers, as Quebec has already done?

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a process in place. As a result of this process, we expect to see a resolution as we have seen in the past. In other words, management and the unions must sit at the table to discuss their differences and find a long-term solution.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, another day, another federal scandal and another \$100 million or so in tax dollars gone missing. This time the money has disappeared from Canada's cash-strapped military, and again phoney invoices are apparently involved.

The Prime Minister was finance minister at the time this computer hardware billing scam at DND was taking place. I would like to know how long he knew that this rip-off of tax dollars was taking place?

Hon. David Pratt (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this information has been in the public domain for quite some time. In fact the Department of National Defence has taken action to deal with it. An employee was fired. A forensic audit is in the process of being conducted. The RCMP has been called in and payments have been withheld to the company.

I should say as well that at this point we have an aggressive strategy to recover the government's money. The company involved, Hewlett-Packard, is in fact cooperating.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if it has been for quite some time, we would have thought the department would have done more about it.

Canadians now realize that the sponsorship scandal is only the tip of the iceberg, and the Prime Minister is the captain of the Liberal *Titanic*.

The Department of National Defence has been defrauded of some \$90 million. The Prime Minister keeps talking about transparency. Instead of waiting for the scandal of the day to be made public, will he come clean today and tell us how many other departments were swindled while he was the finance minister?

•(1445)

Hon. David Pratt (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are not confirming any particular figure in relation to what has happened with these contracts because the forensic audit is still underway. As I said earlier, the RCMP is looking into the matter.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they are a busy bunch over there for sure. There is nothing but things to investigate.

The Prime Minister has had three months to tell Canadians about some of these things that occurred on his watch as the finance minister. Yet it is only when they learn that they have been caught

and the media is about to expose these things that they even bother to acknowledge this latest theft.

I would ask the Prime Minister how in the world did he allow our military to get defrauded out of almost \$100 million?

Hon. David Pratt (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to keep in mind that the management systems and audit systems that are in place worked.

These irregularities with respect to this contract were discovered by the processes in place. We are in the process of taking action on this. I am convinced that we will get every nickel that is owed to the Canadian taxpayer.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is funny. We just saw several thousand dollars being taken away. That is more than nickels, that is for sure, in another scandal.

It is unbelievable when we look at some of the facts and the details here, it goes through every single department in the government. Hundreds of millions of dollars out of DND went missing in action when this Prime Minister was in fact the finance minister. We have no idea whether this DND computer scandal is the end or if it is just the beginning. I think we have uncovered only the tip of the iceberg.

I would like the Prime Minister to stand in his place right now and tell Canadians how much more of their money has been mismanaged and in how many departments.

Hon. David Pratt (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that the Department of National Defence in this instance dealt with this properly, working with our colleagues over at the department of public works. There is a concern about these irregularities. I am confident, based on the action that has been taken so far, that we will recover the taxpayers' money.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Christian Jobin (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, urban public transit is best for the environment. But unfortunately both the provincial and federal levels of government are gradually losing interest in this mode of transportation and leaving that industry to fend for itself.

I would like to hear the Minister of Transport tell this House briefly how he plans to ensure the development of this means of urban transportation, and what action he is planning for the years to come to maintain urban transit.

Hon. Tony Valeri (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

[English]

The government is investing in urban transit. To date, \$735 million has been announced in the past year and more announcements are expected.

Under the Canada strategic infrastructure fund, Transport Canada jointly with our colleagues over at Infrastructure Canada, negotiate the terms and conditions with respect to the provinces and municipalities. We are responsible for the implementation: over \$1 billion of federal funding for urban road and transit infrastructure across the country, with a total of close to \$4 billion. This confirms our commitment to—

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

* * *

TAXATION

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister under whose leadership his government chose to waste \$10.3 billion in corporate tax cuts since the year 2000. The sum of \$10 billion went straight into the pockets of his corporate friends. Now we hear Liberal corporate friends are getting another tax break.

Why would the Prime Minister choose to give more to Liberal corporate friends when there is a litany of social and environmental problems caused by his own conservative choices? How much is enough?

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will recollect that in the course of these tax cuts we have had something in the order of 25% corporate tax cuts and 75% personal tax cuts. We have to bear in mind that we do need to keep a competitive tax environment, which really is a notion that is lost on my friend in the corner. If we do not have a competitive tax environment, there will be no wealth generated in this country. If there were no wealth generated in the country, there would be nothing to tax.

* * *

● (1450)

EQUALIZATION

Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Under the perverse equalization formula, the federal government is now clawing back more than 100% of Saskatchewan's energy revenue, up to \$1.25 for every \$1 raised by the Saskatchewan government. As a result, Saskatchewan families are now seeing more demand on their provincial tax base.

Will the Prime Minister guarantee that Saskatchewan will not be shafted and that it will be treated in exactly the same way as Newfoundland and Nova Scotia with respect to energy revenue and the equalization formula? It is a very important question for the people of Saskatchewan.

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raises a valid question. As members know, the equalization formula is an extraordinarily complicated formula involving 33 sources of revenue. Among those revenues, the formula necessarily kicks up anomalies. The hon. member has pointed out one of the anomalies. I can assure the hon. member that the finance minister is very much seized with this issue.

Oral Questions

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Public Works finally admitted that he did not have a clue as to how many police investigations were being conducted into the ad scam. He said, "It's a little hard to keep up with all the investigations".

How many police investigations are there into the sponsorship scandal?

Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think as I said yesterday, there have been 18—

The Speaker: Order, please. I can hardly hear the minister and he is very close to the Speaker in the seating arrangement. I do not know how the member for Edmonton—Strathcona is going to be able to hear in order to ask a supplementary question. We have to be able to hear the answers to have intelligent supplementary questions. The hon. Minister of Public Works is doing his best to answer. We have to be able to hear.

Hon. Stephen Owen: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to answer the hon. member's question.

As I said yesterday, 18 charges have been laid against one individual as a result of police investigations into the sponsorship issue. There are at least 12 or 13 investigations underway. What I have said is that the investigation arm of the RCMP conducts its own investigations. It makes public what it thinks is appropriate so that investigations will not be compromised. We are not keeping a running count on this side of the House to announce to the public on behalf—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they have no clue what is going on over there, and that is clear from the minister's answer.

[Translation]

The minister now claims he is undertaking a review of 721 sponsorship programs, which ought to have happened years ago. Had the government done so, it would have realized that money intended for organizations such as the *Bluenose* trust had been highjacked.

How many of these 721 files will be passed on to the police?

[English]

Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I released the terms of reference to the special counsel for financial recovery just before question period today. I invite the hon. member to consult those to see the very intensive review that is underway.

In fact there have been previous forensic audits into these files by both the Auditor General and by the department itself with independent auditors. We also have police investigations as we know, as is mentioned. However, we also have, as the member has said, 721 sponsorship cases in total that the special counsel will be looking into in detail to recover any money that was improperly billed or unearned.

*Oral Questions***PRIME MINISTER**

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since January, the Prime Minister has racked up a \$300,000 tab using a Challenger to criss-cross the country and tell Canadians how much he feels their pain.

We know that the Liberal Party ripped off Canadians in the ad scam. Why should Canadians have to pay for the Prime Minister's election campaign tour instead of having the Liberal Party pay for it?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that one hears from Canadians from coast to coast to coast, and especially from Canadians in western Canada, is that they want to see the government there. They want to see the Prime Minister there. They want to see ministers there.

I happen to believe that it is the responsibility of the Prime Minister to visit all parts of the country, and I will continue to do that.

•(1455)

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am sure there are a lot of Canadians who are asking the Prime Minister for their money back.

I am pretty sure the Prime Minister was not negotiating a new equalization bill when he was at the mall in Saint-Bruno, Quebec. Pretty clearly this is a campaign tour. The Prime Minister's first 100 days have not produced a single original piece of legislation.

The Prime Minister spent 13 years trying to knock off Jean Chrétien. Why did he even bother, if the best he can do is adopt Chrétien's entire legislative agenda?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it may be the hon. member's vision of this country that the government should stay here in Ottawa, that no member should visit abroad, that the Prime Minister should not reach out and see Canadians. That is certainly not my vision of what this country is all about. Let me simply say—

The Speaker: Order, please. We have to be able to hear the questions and answers in the House. I cannot hear the Prime Minister because of all the yelling, and it is important that members who are recognized have the right to speak. The right hon. Prime Minister has the floor. We will hear him.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member wants to know why I visited a mall in Saint-Bruno, Quebec. I live in Quebec.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after Mohamed Cherfi was arrested in a Quebec City church, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness defended herself yesterday by blaming the Quebec City police. However, Mr. Cherfi was deported to the United States by the Border Services Agency, not the Quebec City police department. And that agency reports to the federal government, and thus to her.

Can the minister explain why the federal authorities were in such a hurry to deport Mr. Cherfi?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all due processes were followed in this case. As I indicated yesterday, it was the Quebec City police that entered the church in question and removed Mr. Cherfi. In fact there was an immigration warrant in place in relation to Mr. Cherfi. That warrant was executed and after that, all due process was followed in relation to his removal.

[Translation]

Ms. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, clearly the government is giving the bureaucratic approach precedence over any of its international commitments as far as human rights are concerned.

How can the government deport refugees to Algeria when it is advising its own citizens against going there, and how can it justify its refusal to find a humanitarian solution to Mohamed Cherfi's situation?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in fact there has been a recent review of the situation in Algeria. That review was undertaken in consultation with representatives from Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Again, I reiterate that all due process was followed in this case.

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SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Andy Burton (Skeena, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on May 15 last year, when asked why the softwood lumber aid package money had not been distributed to needy B.C. communities, the then minister for western economic diversification answered, and I quote, "To ensure that proposals are realistic and that they are tested for due diligence".

On March 8 this year, two days ago, the current minister said, and I quote, "We have started due diligence". Ten months and the same answer: no money. What is going on?

Hon. Rey Pagtakhan (Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the member should listen carefully to the answers given previously. I indicated that due diligence has been put in place, and in fact put in place by my immediate predecessor in an enhanced due diligence process. Yes, the money is flowing.

Mr. Andy Burton (Skeena, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 450 days have passed since the softwood lumber community adjustment fund was announced, almost one and a half years. Local B.C. community leaders almost gave up in disgust as federal bureaucrats wrangled over how to distribute dollars that should have assisted communities many months ago.

Enough is enough. When will the cheques go out to fund approved and deserving community projects? When will they see a cheque?

Hon. Rey Pagtakhan (Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, \$32 million, 83 projects, and money has started to flow. Yesterday I was speaking to a member of the opposition, of the Alliance Party, and I confirmed to him that the funds are flowing to the projects. The money is flowing.

* * *

•(1500)

CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Thornhill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the hon. minister responsible for the Canadian International Development Agency. Could the minister assure my constituents and all Canadians that the federal government's humanitarian and developmental funding directed to assist and improve the lives of Palestinians and the funding for the United Nations refugee relief association, the aid programs of UNRRA, which is intended for humanitarian assistance, is not being diverted to the Palestinian authority for unauthorized uses that do not support peace?

Hon. Aileen Carroll (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, the main priority of the Government of Canada is to achieve peace and security in the Middle East. As such, the Canadian aid to the Palestinian people is channelled through Canadian agencies and international organizations which have reputable accounting processes, or we also administer them directly through our missions in the region.

CIDA carefully selects our partners in conjunction with federal departments and agencies, as well as with other international donors. The hon. member can be assured that we are confident we are targeting the population—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster.

* * *

INDUSTRY

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the number one issue out there for Canadian industry is to rebuild the bridges with our largest trading partner to the south. Canadians need the Prime Minister to do the job they are paying him for.

Will the Prime Minister put aside the self-serving re-election interests of the Liberal Party, stop hiding from President Bush, deal with him face to face and get on with the job?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a month ago in Monterrey, the president and I had a very successful meeting. I am looking forward to meeting with the president again. In fact, what is happening is that officials in both countries are working on the agenda. The purpose of the meeting is not simply to get together; it is to basically accomplish good things for both our countries. We intend to do that.

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to go or not to go, that is the Prime Minister's dilemma. It seems the softwood lumber industry and the livestock producers are still not a priority for the government. He is dilly-dallying. Why does the Prime Minister put his shrinking re-election hopes ahead of the

Oral Questions

viability of our livestock producers and the softwood lumber industry? Why does he do that?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): That is nonsense, Mr. Speaker. In fact, at the meeting I had with the president a month ago, the two main topics, apart from certain other ones, were in fact mad cow and softwood lumber. Those are the issues that we are working on now.

The hon. member does not seem to understand that if these meetings are going to be successful, we have to work on it. We cannot just stand up in the House of Commons and make empty speeches like the hon. member.

* * *

[Translation]

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the accounting firm hired by the government to investigate Canada Post's role in the sponsorship scandal is Deloitte & Touche. This is the firm that has been auditing the books at Canada Post since 1995.

Since Deloitte & Touche is investigating itself, when its mandate was to ensure that nothing was wrong in Canada Post's ledgers, should the government not immediately withdraw its mandate and give it to a firm that is not involved?

[English]

Hon. Stan Keyes (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, surely the hon. member is not alleging that Canada's number one auditing firm, which is investigating and doing the audit at Canada Post as well as an internal management audit at Canada Post, is in any way not going to do its job in a professional manner.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women is holding its 48th session at its New York headquarters from March 1 to 12 of this year. Could the minister tell the House whether or not Canada is participating in these sessions?

Hon. Jean Augustine (Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Status of Women), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased and honoured to represent Canada and be there with the Canadian delegation to address the 48th session of the Commission on the Status of Women. The session focused on the participation of women in conflict prevention, conflict management and resolution, as well as an emphasis on the role of men and boys as partners in achieving gender equality. This government is committed to gender equality and we work in the interests of and in participation with all Canadians.

Privilege

● (1505)

HEALTH

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister and it concerns HIV-AIDS funding in Canada.

Last June 19, the then minister of health, now the Deputy Prime Minister, told the Canadian AIDS Society:

The point has been made...all parties...agree that it's important to at least double the funding on an annual basis...all I have to do is convince...the Cabinet...that they should come up with \$100 million.

I am not asking a question about an actual figure today. I am asking the Prime Minister a question of principle. Will the Prime Minister confirm that annual funding for HIV-AIDS will be at least doubled?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Health, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the question from the hon. member. We have indeed met the HIV-AIDS groups and it is indeed a priority of our government. A lot of very good work has been done in the last few years through their work. I wish my colleague, the Minister of Finance, were here today to help me answer this question. We will have to wait for the budget. I can tell the House that it is certainly a worthwhile cause and these groups have made an extraordinary contribution to Canadian health and society in the last few years.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

The Speaker: It is my duty to inform the House that pursuant to Standing Order 81(14) the motion to be considered tomorrow during the consideration of the business of supply is as follows:

[*Translation*]

That, as the federal government's 16% contribution to healthcare spending is clearly inadequate, this House urge the government to invest at least half the current year's surplus in health care, over and above the \$2 billion already promised, in order to achieve as rapidly as possible the stable 25% federal contribution called for by Quebec and the provinces.

This motion, standing in the name of the hon. member for Joliette, is votable.

[*English*]

Copies of the motion are available at the table.

The Chair has notice of a question of privilege from the hon. member for St. John's West.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

MAIN ESTIMATES

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by citing Marleau and Montpetit, page 697:

The direct control of national finance has been referred to as the "great task of modern parliamentary government".

At page 728 it states:

The Main Estimates provide a breakdown, by department and agency, of planned government spending for the coming fiscal year.

On February 24, the *Journals* of the House of Commons record that the President of the Treasury Board delivered to you, Mr. Speaker, a message from the Governor General, which you read to the House as follows:

Her Excellency the Governor General transmits to the House of Commons the Main Estimates of sums required for the public service of Canada in the fiscal year ending on March 31, 2005, and in accordance with section 54 of the Constitution Act, 1867, recommends these Estimates to the House of Commons.

...(President of the Treasury Board) laid upon the Table,—Document entitled "Main Estimates for the year 2004-2005". —Sessional Paper No. 8520-373-02.

Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), the Main Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005, were deemed referred to the several standing committees of the House as follows:

And I need not read the list.

The transmission of the main estimates to the House of Commons is at the heart of our constitutional system. These are stated to be the government's spending plans for the coming year and they form the core of the government's request for spending authority.

The government stands behind these spending proposals, otherwise it would have not taken them to the Governor General and asked Her Excellency to recommend them to the House in accordance with the Constitution Act. At least, that is what the House of Commons is entitled to believe.

Now we find out that the entire exercise is a sham; that the government does not stand behind these estimates; that the government is misleading the House of Commons; that the government has once again failed in its duty to be transparent with the House.

I quote from a media release dated February 24:

The...President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, tabled today, in the House of Commons, the 2004-2005 Main Estimates.

One of the top priorities of the government is value for money," said [the President of the Treasury Board]. "More than ever, the Government of Canada is committed to increasing accountability and providing Parliament with the information it needs to oversee the spending of tax dollars.

The main estimates support the government's annual request to Parliament for authority to spend public funds. They also provide information to Parliament about adjustments to projected statutory spending that has been previously authorized by Parliament. In this context, the 2004-2005 main estimates seek a total of \$186.1 billion, including \$2.8 billion in non-budgetary expenditures related to such things as loans and investments, and \$183.3 billion in budgetary spending.

Today's tabling of parts I and II of the main estimates represents the expenditure plan set out in the November 2003 "Economic and Fiscal Update". In addition, these main estimates reflect estimates for new and restructured organizations resulting from the machinery of government changes announced in December 2003. Over the coming month, Parliament will consider an appropriation bill to authorize interim spending for the 2004-2005 fiscal year based on these main estimates.

● (1510)

In the same news release, dated February 24, 2004, the government wrote:

Privilege

Due to the extent of the machinery of government changes announced in December 2003, it is the intention of the Government to table a revised set of Main Estimates later during the 2004-2005 fiscal year. This will allow new and restructured organizations sufficient time to finalize resource discussions as well as to develop their plans and priorities in time for Parliament to consider appropriation bills to authorize final spending. At the same time, it will allow the Government to seek additional spending authority for expenditures that were not sufficiently known in time for the Main Estimates and which are normally sought from Parliament through Supplementary Estimates later during the fiscal year.

Essentially what the President of Treasury Board was saying was that what he had originally tendered to the House of Commons was invalid. The government never informed the House that the estimate book was invalid, that it was a dead parrot.

Instead, the government immediately referred the estimates to the committees of the House and wished the committees good luck on what only the government knew would be a mystery tour.

The committees will not be able to examine the estimates and get answers on public expenditures because there is not a minister of the crown or a single public official who can honestly stand behind these false estimates.

These are the Chrétien estimates; the estimates of a dead government, and that is not saying that this one is a very lively one either, by the way. All that the committees have before them is the dead hand of Jean Chrétien. Yet the House of Commons has been told by the Governor General that these are the spending plans of the Government of Canada and, under the doctrine of responsible government, the current administration has staked its life on the passage of these estimates.

What appears to be happening is that the government will use these fictitious estimates as the base amount on which it will seek interim supply and, having secured interim supply, it will then be able to use internal orders to reallocate funds for other purposes; and dare I suggest the gun registry?

Mr. Speaker, the business of supply is at the very core of responsible government. You, yourself, in 1997, devoted months of study to the role of the business of supply in the House of Commons. The House is entitled to take the estimate book at face value.

Let me refer the Chair to pages 1 to 8, the introduction to Part II. It states:

The purpose of these Estimates is to present to Parliament information in support of budgetary and non-budgetary spending authorities that will be sought through Appropriation bill.

Mr. Speaker, their time will come, let me assure you. The minister's media release says that is not true. At the time of the tabling of the estimates there were comments floating around the House that it was unusual for government to have tabled the estimates without prior notice. The reason is now clear. The government has no estimates.

The government has placed before the House of Commons a fraudulent document knowing that it is false. It did this to start the business of supply so that when the clock stops in June it will have full access to the people's money without telling Parliament or the public how it will spend it. The elected representatives of the people of Canada would be voting \$183 billion without knowing what it

was for and without being able to question or challenge those spending plans.

This is a gross contempt for the people of Canada, an arrogant attempt to undermine democracy and a complete denial of responsible government.

Once again we are seeing the Prime Minister trying to fudge financial questions. He has come before Parliament unprepared to govern. He has no agenda and he refuses—

• (1515)

The Speaker: The hon. member seems to have exhausted the procedural part of his argument and we will perhaps hear a response from the President of the Treasury Board on this matter.

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me try to deal with this in two or three parts.

If I understand the member correctly, the first part of the claim is that in the news release we indicated that we were tabling the main estimates and somehow we had a secret plan to table a second set of estimates. The secret plan was in the backgrounder to the same news release, so there was no attempt to do anything in secret.

Let me just explain to the member that in addition to reading Marleau and Montpetit he might want to read the standing orders of the House of Commons which require the government to put down the main estimates before the end of February. At that time we had not completed, and will not have completed for some time, all the reallocations and reappportionings that occur because of the changes. The legislation to restructure departments has not been passed in the House, et cetera.

We have met our requirement to put the mains down, but because of the work done by the Speaker, in a former life in the House, the former whip of our party and the current chair of the public accounts committee, we wanted to go further in the name of transparency.

Therefore, we said, in addition to tabling the estimates, as we have done all the time and which reflects the current financial position of the House, because we know there will be further division of the assets and the responsibilities between those departments after the House has passed the legislation, that we will come forward and reflect those changes in an additional presentation to the House, in the name of absolute transparency so the members will have absolutely accurate information. This is an enhancement of democratic responsibility, not a reduction.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board stood in the House and told us that these were the government's main estimates. He then went on to authorize a statement outside the House that said the direct opposite of that.

The Speaker: We do not need to rehash. We had the whole document read by the hon. member for St. John's West, so I do not want to cover the same ground.

If there is something else in argument that I need to hear on this point, I will hear it, but I am not going to listen to multiple speeches.

Points of Order

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on what the President of the Treasury Board just said. In fact, that even compounds the whole violation of our privileges even further. I would like to give one illustration of this.

The Standing Order 81(4) (a) and (b) states that:

not later than May 1, the Leader of the Opposition, in consultation with the leaders of the other Opposition parties, may give notice during the time specified in Standing Order 54 of a motion to refer consideration of the main estimates of no more than two named departments or agencies to committees of the whole, and the said motion shall be deemed adopted and the said estimates shall be deemed withdrawn from the standing committee to which they were referred.

In the reply that the minister just gave you, Mr. Speaker, that makes it impossible for the Leader of the Opposition to make an informed decision on this matter because it poses the same problem for part (b) of the Standing Order. Part (b) reads:

not later than the third sitting day prior to May 31, the Leader of the Opposition may give notice during the time specified in Standing Order 54 of a motion to extend consideration of the main estimates of a named department or agency and the said motion shall be deemed adopted when called on “Motions” on the last sitting day prior to May 31.

In conclusion, at the Senate national finance committee on Tuesday, March 9, the Treasury Board official gave a date of May 27 during her testimony as to when the reports on priorities and plans will be tabled. That would place important information before the House past the time for committees to consider it, past the deadline for the Leader of the Opposition to refer a concern to a committee of the whole and past the deadline for the Leader of the Opposition to extend consideration of an item at committee.

Therefore the action of the government circumvents the entire estimates process and interferes with the right of the Leader of the Opposition, and consequently all other members.

• (1520)

The Speaker: I am sure I have heard the arguments advanced.

It seems to me we have had government reorganization before. That appears to be, from what I heard in the remarks by the hon. member for St. John's West in quoting the attachment to the press release that was tabled, or delivered, or however made public by the President of the Treasury Board, that indicated that following government reorganization there would be some changes in the estimates, which is understandable.

I will look into the matter to see if there is some procedural irregularity in what has transpired.

It seems to me that this kind of situation must have, and in fact I am sure has, happened before in our parliamentary experience. We will see how it was handled.

Mr. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, it is without precedent.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough suggests it is without precedent. Government reorganizations have happened when departments get shifted around or the responsibilities in various department are moved from one minister to another. This is not uncommon.

We will look into how it was dealt with in previous estimates and when it appeared in the estimates, whether it was done by supplementary estimate, whether it was done by tabling amended

estimates, or however it was done. I will get back to the House with a ruling on the question raised by the hon. member for St. John's West in due course.

I am sure that in dealing with this matter the House will deal with it thoroughly and with all propriety.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORDER IN COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to draw attention to a change in *Hansard* which I think is material and perhaps ominous.

Yesterday the government House leader replied to a question of privilege that I had raised. He admitted the government had failed in its duty to table certain orders in council under Standing Order 110 (1).

I heard him distinctly when he attributed the mistake to “une erreur administrative”. I believe other members listening on translation would have heard the words translated as “administrative error”.

[Translation]

The French edition of yesterday's *Hansard* contains no reference to the words “une erreur administrative”. In the official record of our debates there is no explanation for the failure of the government to respect the formal instructions of this House. It is the same in English.

[English]

The English version of *Hansard* contains no reference to an administrative error.

Two things concern me about this. First, it appears that someone has intervened with *Hansard* to change materially the record of what was said in the House. This is not a grammatical change. It was material. It related to the reason the government gave for not following the rules.

In the words that were spoken the failure was attributed to “une erreur administrative”. In the record, which is what will be consulted, no explanation was given.

That leads to the second reason this concerns me. The practices of the House require us to accept the word of other members. When the government House leader said this was “une erreur administrative”, I accepted that explanation. Now that explanation has disappeared. Why did it disappear? Was this another administrative error, or was the language withdrawn deliberately because it was either incomplete or inaccurate? Was there some other reason why the order of Parliament was ignored?

I had asked that the Speaker consider finding the government in contempt in any event because it had broken a clear obligation. The Speaker decided instead to order that the period be extended in which those orders in council can be considered by a committee.

It is hazardous to try to read the mind of Mr. Speaker, but I had quietly assumed that his decision was affected by the minister's deliberate reference to "une erreur administrative".

Had the government's reason for breaking the rules been simply indifference, or had there been some more base motive, the Speaker might well have come to a different conclusion. Certainly in the future, anyone in search of precedents for governments ignoring an order of the House will find in the written *Hansard* a ministerial explanation that is materially different and allows a broader interpretation as precedent than what actually occurred.

I would welcome an explanation by the minister and facing that, an investigation by the Speaker. This new government is becoming defined by its administrative errors. I hope that is all this is.

• (1525)

[Translation]

Hon. Jacques Saada (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister responsible for Democratic Reform, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Right Hon. member has spoken of a manipulation of *Hansard*, if I understand correctly. That is an allegation I refute clearly and unequivocally.

As for the details of his allegation, I did not hear the beginning. I reserve the right to look at *Hansard* in detail before I give him an answer.

Whatever the facts, one thing is certain: no one on my side has tried to change anything at all in the text of *Hansard*. It is an absolutely ridiculous allegation.

[English]

Right Hon. Joe Clark: Mr. Speaker, the minister may characterize it as a ridiculous allegation. He cannot dismiss these two facts. One, in this House, he said the reason the rules were not followed was "une erreur administrative". In *Hansard*, which reports the proceedings of this House, that phrase did not occur. That is a material difference.

Now he can tell us it was achieved by the tooth fairy, or by Groupaction, or by somebody else. The fact is somebody changed the record of *Hansard*.

The Speaker: The right hon. member for Calgary Centre has raised the matter. I am quite prepared to look into the issue to see what was actually said in the House, because we will have, of course, the videotape of that. I will look at the blues and see what transpired that made the change and get back to the House if necessary.

The right hon. member has raised the point and it is only reasonable the Chair look into it. If the hon. government House leader wishes to add something else to clarify the situation, fine. Otherwise, I will simply look into the matter and get back to the House.

[Translation]

Hon. Jacques Saada: Mr. Speaker, I am having a quick look at *Hansard* and I remember very well having said the words that are here and they are very clear. I said, "I regret that the obligation was not fulfilled—". Those were not my exact words, but now I am quoting:

Routine Proceedings

However, I wish to remind hon. members that all this information was published in the *Canada Gazette*. I also wish to inform the House that the internal follow-up procedure has been tightened up to avoid a repeat of this situation.

Those are the words I spoke and I do not see where they are going with this or why.

[English]

The Speaker: I will look into the matter and get back to the House in due course.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Hélène Scherrer (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) and section 44 of the Official Languages Act, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the annual report on official languages for fiscal year 2002-03.

* * *

• (1530)

[English]

FIRST NATIONS FISCAL AND STATISTICAL MANAGEMENT ACT

Hon. Andy Mitchell (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): moved for leave to introduce Bill C-23, an act to provide for real property taxation powers of first nations, to create a First Nations Tax Commission, First Nations Financial Management Board, First Nations Finance Authority and First Nations Statistical Institute and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

He said: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the special order made previously, I would like to inform the House that this bill is in the same form as Bill C-19 was at the time of prorogation of the previous session.

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

The Speaker: The Chair is satisfied that this bill is in the same form as Bill C-19 was at the time of prorogation of the second session of the 37th Parliament.

[Translation]

Accordingly, pursuant to order made on Tuesday, February 10, 2004, the bill is deemed read the second time, referred to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Northern Development and Natural Resources and reported.

[English]

The bill will therefore stand on the Order Paper at report stage and the notice period will be pursuant to Standing Order 76.1(1).

Routine Proceedings

(Bill deemed read the second time, considered in committee and reported)

* * *

[Translation]

PETITIONS

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition from constituents in the Quebec City region calling for public representations to be made to the United States government for the release of five Cubans. A committee has been set up and is seeking international support for a new trial to be held for these individuals. I ask the government to reflect on the conviction of five Cubans who have been unjustly incarcerated.

[English]

MARRIAGE

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a number of petitions signed by hundreds of people across Canada.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to immediately hold a renewed debate on the definition of marriage and to reaffirm, as it did in June 1999 in response to the motion by the official opposition, its commitment to take all necessary steps to preserve marriage as the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

JUSTICE

Hon. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present 944 signatures today on petitions for Steven Truscott.

On November 29, 2001 a 690 application was submitted. On January 24, 2002 Justice Kaufman was appointed to look into the Steven Truscott case.

This very important petition, along with 8,000 other signatures, asks that Justice Kaufman listen to the fact that we need a speedy end to this. Steven Truscott has waited a long time for justice. The petitioners call on Justice Kaufman to complete his review.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present to the House today four petitions requesting that the Government of Canada hold a binding national referendum together with the next general election to ask the following question: Must the Government of Canada continue to define marriage as the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others, yes or no?

Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Fanshawe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am in receipt of some 25,000 signatures from citizens of London, Ontario and the region immediately around London, Ontario. I am pleased to table the latest 1,500 of those signatures that have been properly vetted.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to uphold the traditional definition of marriage which has served this country since Confederation, being the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

The petitioners note the inconsistency of the government on this issue over the past couple of years. They ask that the government return to a full and clear statement of the traditional definition of marriage and take all necessary steps to defend the same.

• (1535)

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege today, pursuant to Standing Order 36, to present a petition with close to 600 names on it. In petitions like this, thousands of names have come in from my constituents. In this particular petition, the petitioners are from Oyen, Cereal, Killam, Sedgewick, Hanna, Drumheller, Stettler and Camrose.

The petitioners call upon the government to pass legislation to recognize the institution of marriage in federal law as being the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

I take a great deal of pride and privilege in presenting this petition.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table two petitions. The first one is signed by 60 citizens, residents of Manitoba, who are also raising concerns about the institution of marriage.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to pass legislation to recognize the institution of marriage in federal law as being the lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

LABELLING OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): The second petition, Mr. Speaker, is from hundreds of Canadians concerned about the inaction by the government with respect to alcohol warning labels.

The petitioners acknowledge that Parliament passed a bill three years ago requiring such labels and that forthcoming action has not followed. They call upon the government to act immediately upon the wishes of Parliament and the wishes of the people of this country.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise on behalf of hundreds of people across the country, 600 from the province of Quebec, almost 400 from the rest of Canada. They join the thousands and thousands of people across the country who implore Parliament as the elected representatives of the people to enact legislation that would enshrine in legislation the traditional definition of marriage, the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of constituents who want me to table a petition asking that Parliament pass legislation to recognize the institution of marriage in federal law as being the lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

The petitioners join thousands of others across the constituency and a majority across Canada who want Parliament to act properly on this matter.

Routine Proceedings

MARRIAGE

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition on the same subject as the one presented by the member for Okanagan—Coquihalla on the subject of the recognition of the loving and committed relationships of same sex couples.

The petitioners point out that same sex couples do indeed form loving and committed relationships but are denied the equal ability to celebrate those relationships through marriage. They point out that the protection of true family values requires that all families be respected equally. They note that denying same sex couples the equal right to marry reinforces attitudes of intolerance and discrimination, and is inconsistent with the Canadian values of equality, dignity, and respect.

The petitioners from my constituency of Burnaby—Douglas and constituents from across Canada, and thousands from Okanagan—Coquihalla, call upon Parliament to pass legislation that would provide same sex couples with the equal right to marry.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by constituents dealing with the same topic.

The petitioners say that marriage is the best foundation for families in the raising of children, and that marriage, the union between a man and woman, is being challenged. The petitioners pray that legislation be brought into effect to reaffirm that it be defined as being the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of others.

EMERGENCY LOCATOR TRANSMITTER

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a second petition to present on a rather interesting topic dealing with electronic locating transmitter signals that indicate an emergency position with a response beacon.

This petition has been signed by 63 people from my constituency. The petitioners point out that it is the responsibility of the Department of Transport to act quickly on this. It would end up saving literally millions of dollars a year in trying to locate downed private aircraft.

NATIONAL PARKS

Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to present three separate petitions on behalf of the good people of Dauphin—Swan River.

The first petition calls upon the government to reduce national park and camping fees.

● (1540)

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I wish to present deals with the issue of the tragedy that is occurring in western Canada today regarding the beef industry.

The petitioners request that Parliament take immediate action to develop internationally recognized protocols designed to restore confidence in Canadian beef products and to open international beef markets to Canadian producers.

Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the last petition is signed by thousands of petitioners who call upon Parliament to immediately hold a renewed debate on the definition of marriage and to reaffirm, as it did in 1999, its commitment to take all necessary steps to preserve marriage as the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by a number of people who wish to have marriage maintained as the union of one man and one woman, again reflecting a vote that was taken here in the House of Commons in 1999.

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too have a petition signed by a few hundred people from the Edmonton area.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to pass legislation to recognize the institution of marriage in federal law as being the lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition to present today on the same subject.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to recognize the institution of marriage as being between one man and one woman. The petitioners call upon Parliament to pass legislation to recognize the institution of marriage in federal law as being the lifelong union of one man and one woman.

Ms. Paddy Torsney: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The earlier points of order seem to have confused some of us as to the agenda. With permission of the House, I would like to revert to presentation of reports as I would like to table a report.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Ms. Paddy Torsney (Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to table in the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian group of the Interparliamentary Union, which represented Canada at the 109th conference and related meetings of the Interparliamentary Union, held in Geneva, Switzerland, from September 28 to October 3, 2003.

[*English*]

The subjects that were discussed were: the role of parliamentarians assisting multilateral organizations in ensuring peace and security, and building an international coalition for peace; global public goods and the contribution of new information and communications technologies to good governance; the improvement of parliamentary democracy; and the management of globalization.

As usual, I can report that our colleagues on all sides of the House were an incredibly effective working team.

*Private Members' Business***QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

Hon. Joe Jordan (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Hon. Joe Jordan (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1545)

[English]

THE ACADIANS

The House resumed from March 9 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:44 p.m., pursuant to order made on Monday, March 8, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 382 under private members' business.

[Translation]

Call in the members.

● (1555)

(The House divided on the motion, which was negatived on the following division:)

(Division No. 22)

YEAS**Members**

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Bachand (Saint-Jean) | Bélair |
| Bellemare | Bergeron |
| Bigras | Blaikie |
| Bourgeois | Cadman |
| Cardin | Clark |
| Comartin | Crête |
| Dalphond-Guiral | Day |
| Desjarlais | Desrochers |
| Duceppe | Gagnon (Québec) |
| Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay) | Gagnon (Champlain) |
| Gaudet | Gauthier |
| Godin | Guay |
| Guimond | Hearn |
| Jaffer | Laframboise |
| Laliberté | Lalonde |
| Lanctôt | Lill |
| Loubier | Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands) |
| Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni) | MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough) |
| Marceau | Mark |
| Masse | Matthews |
| McNally | Ménard |
| Merrifield | Nystrom |
| Pallister | Paquette |
| Peric | Perron |
| Picard (Drummond) | Plamondon |

Robinson
Roy
Schellenberger
Stoffer
Telegdi
Tremblay
Wasylycia-Leis — 63

Rocheleau
Sauvageau
St-Hilaire
Strahl
Toews
Vellacott

NAYS**Members**

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Ablonczy | Alcock |
| Anderson (Victoria) | Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands) |
| Augustine | Bagnell |
| Bailey | Bakopanos |
| Barnes (London West) | Barrette |
| Bélangier | Bennett |
| Benoit | Blondin-Andrew |
| Bonin | Boudria |
| Breitkreuz | Brisson |
| Brown | Bulte |
| Burton | Calder |
| Caplan | Carroll |
| Castonguay | Catterall |
| Chamberlain | Coderre |
| Collenette | Comuzzi |
| Cotler | Cuzner |
| DeVillers | Dion |
| Discepola | Dromisky |
| Drouin | Efford |
| Elley | Finlay |
| Fitzpatrick | Fontana |
| Frulla | Gallant |
| Godfrey | Goldring |
| Graham | Grewal |
| Guarnieri | Harvard |
| Harvey | Hill (Prince George—Peace River) |
| Jackson | Jennings |
| Jobin | Johnston |
| Jordan | Karetak-Lindell |
| Knutson | Kraft Sloan |
| LeBlanc | Lee |
| Leung | Lincoln |
| Longfield | MacAulay |
| Macklin | Malhi |
| Marcil | Marleau |
| McCallum | McGuire |
| McKay (Scarborough East) | McLellan |
| Mills (Toronto—Danforth) | Mills (Red Deer) |
| Minna | Mitchell |
| Murphy | Myers |
| O'Brien (Labrador) | Owen |
| Pagtakhan | Paradis |
| Pettigrew | Phinney |
| Pratt | Price |
| Proulx | Redman |
| Regan | Reid (Lanark—Carleton) |
| Robillard | Saada |
| Savoy | Scherrer |
| Schmidt | Scott |
| Shepherd | Sorenson |
| St-Jacques | St-Julien |
| St. Denis | Stinson |
| Thibault (West Nova) | Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest) |
| Tonks | Torsney |
| Valeri | Vancief |
| Volpe | Wappel |
| Wayne | Whelan |
| Wilfert | Wood — 116 |

PAIRED**Members**

Asselin
Fournier
Girard-Bujold
Caccia
Galloway
McTeague — 6

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Mr. Réginald Bélair: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I missed the opportunity to vote in favour of this motion. I seek unanimous consent to have my vote recorded as being in favour.

Private Members' Business

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House to allow the hon. member to vote in favour of the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: His vote will be recorded.

[*English*]

It being 3:58 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

* * *

FISHERIES

The House resumed from February 4 consideration of the motion.

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate being able to take part in this discussion at private members' hour. I want to remind the House that we are talking about the motion by the hon. member for St. John's West:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should take immediate action to extend custodial management over the Nose and Tail of the Grand Banks and of the Flemish Cap.

The reason I am rising today to discuss this matter is my involvement in the fisheries and oceans committee of the House. This particular matter has been of great interest to the fisheries and oceans committee for over two years.

On June 5, 2002, the fisheries and oceans committee tabled a report entitled "Foreign Overfishing: Its Impacts and Solutions, Conservation on the Nose and Tail of the Grand Banks and the Flemish Cap", under the able chairmanship of the hon. member for Malpeque.

The report was the result of some significant work that the committee did. I was on that committee. We travelled to Newfoundland and Labrador to listen to the people of that province talk about the difficulties they had with the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization and what it was or was not doing.

It is a lengthy report in the sense that it details a lot of the problems, but what I want to bring to the attention of the House is that the committee unanimously recommended certain things. This is important, because at that time there were five parties that had members on the committee and this was a unanimous report of the committee.

What did it recommend? The committee recommended custodial management. On page 18, the report states:

Under a custodial management regime, Canada would assume sole responsibility for the management and conservation of the areas of our continental shelf beyond the 200-mile limit: the Nose and Tail of the Grand Banks and the Flemish Cap. However, foreign fishing interests would not be removed; instead, historic allocation and access would be respected.

...Under such a regime, Canada would conduct the science, set the [total allowable catches] and implement and administer a conservation-based management system that would include monitoring and enforcement.

...The Committee believes that imposing a custodial management regime is a necessary and reasonable response to the failure of NAFO to rectify its current problems and to bring its members under control.

Recommendations were made accordingly. Almost immediately, the then minister of fisheries and oceans rejected out of hand the

recommendations of the committee. This was unfortunate, because it did not indicate that there had been any serious study of the recommendations of the committee and of why that committee unanimously came to the conclusions it did.

Eventually the member for Malpeque was promoted to solicitor general and a new committee was constituted. I became the chair of the committee. The committee revisited this issue after it received the formal response of the government, which the committee felt was totally and utterly inadequate. We re-examined the issue and, again unanimously, five parties came to the same conclusions that we had come to earlier.

We tabled that report in March 2003. We were even more specific in what we wanted to say. We gave even further deadlines that we thought were appropriate. I am not going to go into all of the rationale. I just want to say that there was nothing in the government's response that impressed any of the members of the committee. That is why the committee a second time unanimously indicated that it wished the government to implement custodial management.

The second recommendation was:

That the Government of Canada inform NAFO and its contracting parties that Canada will proceed with the implementation of custodial management on the Nose and Tail of the Grand Banks and on the Flemish Cap, and will withdraw from NAFO no later than December 31, 2004, in accordance with Article XXIV of the NAFO Convention.

● (1600)

On unanimous report two, again rejected by the government, the government gave the standard bureaucratic response of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and basically of the Department of Foreign Affairs that we could not do this because of international law.

The fact of the matter is, if we examine international law, it is not developed by the meek. It is developed by the bold. It is not developed by the reticent. It is developed by the confident. In this case, we either watch the Grand Banks die, we watch the fishery die, we watch Newfoundland and Labrador die or we do something.

The hon. member who moved the motion, in his earlier remarks, made the comment that he thought the Government of Canada did not have the guts to do it. Of course the problem is that this is not a one particular government problem because this has been an ongoing position of the Government of Canada.

Indeed, if we look at the comments of the person who probably will be the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, in an interview with the *Moncton Times and Transcript* of February 20, he stated:

Federal responsibility for fisheries should focus on ensuring fairness in our international agreements. I will endeavour to substantially reform the North Atlantic Fisheries Organization so that Canada's fish stocks will be better protected, and I would reserve the right to take unilateral action to protect them if these international arrangements fail.

That sounds pretty much like the policy today. However, it is time for some testicular fortitude by the Government of Canada. We have to assert our recognition that the stocks are in serious danger, and the problem with NAFO is that it does not have an effective enforcement mechanism.

Private Members' Business

We can catch the people. We can have the observers. They can report that fish taken were too small or too many fish were taken or the wrong species were taken, but ultimately those fishermen are then sent back to their own country and it is the laws of that country which do or more particular do not enforce the breaches of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization's quotas that have been set. There is a very ineffective enforcement mechanism in NAFO.

When the fisheries committee travelled to Europe to talk to NAFO nations, this was clearly acknowledged by everybody we talked to in Norway, Brussels and Iceland. Wherever we went, it was clear that NAFO had very few teeth. There is no way that NAFO is doing the job to protect the fishery. I think it is fair to say that the Government of Canada realizes this.

I note that on March 5, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the Minister of National Defence announced collaboration on marine security initiatives. What they said among other things was, and I quote from the news release:

—they plan to enhance the fisheries patrol presence on the Nose and Tail of the Grand Banks. Specifically, [the Ministers of Fisheries and Oceans and National Defence] announced that their departments are working aggressively on a strategy that would ensure a continual fisheries patrol presence on the Nose and Tail of the Grand Banks in the near future.

It is about time. One of the reasons in all likelihood that the ministers have come to this decision, which is a good one, is because of the pressure put on them by the fisheries and oceans committee of the House of Commons, recognizing this problem, travelling around the world, bringing this problem to the attention of fishing nations and explaining to them just how serious an economic impact the lack of fisheries is to the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I want to praise the Ministers of Fisheries and Oceans and National Defence for coming up with this initiative. What this initiative shows us is if they feel it is necessary to have a patrol presence on the nose and tail of the Grand Banks, clearly NAFO is not working. If NAFO were working, we would not need to have patrol vessels out there and a grand announcement by the two ministers that we would do this. There is something seriously wrong with NAFO, and that is there is not an enforcement mechanism.

The only way we can ensure that we save the fish there, not only for us but for future generations, is to implement custodial management. All the talk in the world, all the diplomatic niceties in the world will not do the trick. If NAFO cannot do it, we will have to act unilaterally, not in our own interest but in the interests of all fishing nations. All historic fishing nations will have their rights protected.

• (1605)

We constantly hear the Department of Foreign Affairs saying that we cannot do this or we cannot do that. At one time we had a three mile international limit. The reason we had it was because the cannonball fired three miles. If the technology had existed back then for a 200 nautical mile cannon, then we would have a 200 nautical mile limit right now.

I support the motion. I would urge that we do it in accordance with the dates set in the most recent unanimous report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

Mr. Andy Burton (Skeena, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to congratulate the member for St. John's West for bringing forth this motion. I would like to read the motion once again so that it is clear for those who may be listening. The motion reads:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should take immediate action to extend custodial management over the Nose and Tail of the Grand Banks and of the Flemish Cap.

For those who perhaps do not know, those areas are outside of our 200 mile limit that we currently patrol, maintain and look after in terms of our fishery resource. These areas happen to be very rich in fishing capability. The areas are fished by fleets from all over the world.

I will go into a little history. When Newfoundland joined Confederation in 1949, it brought with it a remarkable resource. This resource has been badly managed. That resource in the northwest Atlantic was one of the richest natural resources in the world. It once sustained fishing fleets from not only North America, but Europe, Spain, Portugal, Russia and other countries.

From 1989 to present, the spawning biomass of the northern cod stock has declined precipitously to 1% of its former level. A lot of other groundfish stocks are meeting a similar fate. This is of great concern, not only to Newfoundland and Labradorians and others on the east coast, but to all of Canada. This was a very valuable resource.

The collapse of these groundfish stocks has been attributed to a number of issues, including environmental concerns, overfishing by all fleets, poor reporting, poor scientific advice and a number of other things. However, Canada has done its part in trying to control, limit and manage these stocks to the best of its ability.

The problem is that outside of the 200 mile limit the straddling stocks, the stocks that go back and forth across the line because fish know no boundaries, cannot be controlled adequately. The NAFO arrangement that is supposed to manage it has very sadly and badly failed the test.

I will get to the nub of the matter, the demand for custodial management a little later on, but one thing we have to look at is the ecosystem management because it is really the crux of the matter.

There are a number of issues that could help us deal with that, as well as custodial management, but one is ecosystem management. We have to look at the other species that live in our oceans besides fish. There are seals, whales, mammals, et cetera. We have become a predator in terms of utilizing this resource. We have to look at managing the whole ecosystem, rather than just a specific species.

We have tried to manage the fish. We have done a very poor job of it overall. We have to look at some other ways of dealing with things.

I was fortunate enough to be with the fisheries committee group that travelled to the east coast some two years ago. We saw and heard firsthand how difficult things were and how the decline in the fish stocks had affected communities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We have communities that are on the edge and not surviving as communities. It is very sad to see these situations happening. For hundreds of years these communities survived on this very valuable resource, but today they cannot survive, and something must change.

The North Atlantic Fishing Organization is supposed to control these fisheries. There are a number of inherent problems with that situation. I will explain why it does not work.

The reason it is not working is because enforcement is left to the member nations. In other words, the fox is in charge of the henhouse. Rules can be violated. Without proper supervision and proper enforcement, the rules will not make a difference. It does not control the situation.

This is the whole problem with NAFO. It is an unmanageable and out of control situation where some nations, not all, flagrantly violate the privilege of fishing off our coast, even though it is outside of our 200 mile limit. That is a huge concern, and it is not being dealt with properly.

• (1610)

Some impacts of the overfishing off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador have been stated by Richard Cashin, chairman of a task force on income and adjustment in the Atlantic fishery. He says:

We are dealing here with a famine of biblical scale—a great destruction. The social and economic consequences of this great destruction are a challenge to be met and a burden to be borne by the nation, not just those who are its victims.

Those words are very true. They were written in 1993, and they are even more relevant today.

It is really difficult to comprehend the scale of devastation, not only in Atlantic Canada and Quebec but especially in the rural outposts in areas of Newfoundland and Labrador, from the loss of the northern cod stocks and virtually every other groundfish stock. It is something of which we have to get a grasp.

What we are doing is not working. When things do not work, we have to fix them. It is time for leadership from this government, as the previous speaker, my colleague across the floor, said. I sit on the fisheries committee with him. He is now the chairman and is doing a very good job. He was with us when we travelled to the east coast. He saw for himself the issues and the problems.

If we were to create a custodial management situation, we would not be saying that other countries could not fish there. What we would be saying is that we could control it in a much more responsible and sustainable manner.

What Canada would do is conduct the science, set the total annual catches, and implement and administer a conservation based management system that would include monitoring and enforcement. This would certainly cost us money, but in the overall scheme of things, the recovery of the fishery and resource would more than offset any costs in the short term.

It should be made clear to other NAFO parties that Canada would regard such an action as a last resort in the event of failure of NAFO. This is from the committee report. Frankly, I think NAFO is failing and has failed. It really is time to get this under control, and try to deal with it in a more equitable manner.

Routine Proceedings

When the committee tabled its report back in June 2002, unfortunately the minister chose to disregard it in its entirety. That was very short-sighted. We have a new minister today. With all due respect to the previous minister, I firmly strongly urge the new minister to take this issue into very serious consideration. The committee recommended the custodial management of the nose and tail of the Grand Banks and the Flemish cap. It is absolutely critical that this be dealt with in a firm manner. The patrols that were announced recently expanded the controls, and that is useful.

Given the budgetary constraints, DFO is always under difficulty when it comes to budgetary matters and cutbacks. We cannot adequately deal with this issue by just adding a few more patrols. We patrol now and it is inadequate. Even with the inadequacy of our patrolling, I understand that over the last 10 years some 300 violations were documented and recorded. Out of those 300 violations, we have very little knowledge of any penalties that were enforced.

When I was in Iceland last year with the fisheries committee, a fishing vessel called the *Olga* was caught fishing moratoria cod and was brought into port, I believe, in St. John's. It was released and disappeared. We do not know what penalties, if any, were ever brought to bear on the vessel, its crew and master. This happens time after time.

The bottom line at the end of the day is that Canada has to take control of these areas. I strongly urge the government to look at this, take a very firm hand in the matter and deal with it. I think the support is there.

• (1615)

It is an important matter for all Canadians, not just those on the east coast. It is a matter with which all Canadians should be concerned. It is a matter of our sovereignty. I will be supporting this.

Mr. Roy Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Discussions have taken place among all parties and I believe you would find consent to revert to tabling reports from committees in order for me to table the report of the Standing Committee on Finance on Bill C-21.

• (1620)

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE

Mr. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Finance on Bill C-21, an act to amend the customs tariff. It was agreed on Tuesday, March 9, 2004, to report it without amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the House for its cooperation.

Private Members' Business

The member for Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

FISHERIES

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am truly quite pleased to speak to this debate and to remind the House with great pleasure that the Bloc Québécois will have no trouble supporting this motion.

For the benefit of those who will read this beautiful prose one day, I would like to read Motion M-136 in order to provide the full text:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should take immediate action to extend custodial management over the Nose and Tail of the Grand Banks and of the Flemish Cap.

When my colleague from Matapédia—Matane spoke on October 23, 2003, he pointed out to the House that the translation of custodial management in French made no sense. A request was made to correct the motion, but to no avail.

I would like to help the House write the text of the motion properly in French. It is rather irritating to have to stop our language from being massacred and to see that there is a lack of political will to do what we ask about something as insignificant as accurate language.

The first report tabled by the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans is entitled, "Foreign Overfishing—Its Impacts and Solutions: Conservation on the Nose and Tail of the Grand Bank and the Flemish Cap".

Report 2, tabled in March 2003, is called "Custodial Management Outside Canada's 200-Mile Limit".

This has never had anything to do with the term used in the translation of this motion, "gestion de garde". This is a nonsensical expression and I hope that this time we will get what we want and the text will be written as it should be, since the matter is of some importance.

Thank you for the opportunity to make that aside, and now I will move on to the speech itself.

What is important perhaps is to provide those listening with a little more information. People do know something about them. But the Grand Banks of Newfoundland always sounds a bit odd. I remember when we were kids, we made all sorts of jokes about the name. But we never really knew what we were talking about. I think it is important to explain what is meant by the Nose and Tail of the Grand Banks and the Flemish Cap.

There have always been limits. When I was young, we were used to hearing that our territorial limits were three miles from the coast. After that, it went to 12 miles and then 200. So everything up to 200 miles off our coasts is considered Canadian territory.

In two areas off the coast of Newfoundland, the continental shelf extends beyond the 200-mile limit; two peaks jut out, outside that

zone. These two peaks are referred to as the Nose and Tail of the Grand Banks because they are part of that historic fishing ground known as the Grand Banks of Newfoundland. That is an extremely important fact.

Then, the other important part is the Flemish Cap. The Flemish Cap is a sort of underwater island, reaching beyond the 200-mile limit, but it is both within and beyond Canada's continental shelf.

Thus, there are three areas in which Canada says it cannot intervene and we have nations from all around the world there, blatantly abusing the resources that swim in Canadian waters.

I remember when I was a member of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans having discussed this issue before the report was complete. I was astonished at the kind of nostrums they were offering us, such as saying that our authority did not extend beyond the 200-mile limit.

Later, the organization called NAFO was created with the aim of overseeing all this.

• (1625)

Nevertheless, Canada gets cold feet when it comes time to shoulder its responsibilities, as we see in many sectors. With respect to agricultural subsidies, for example, Canada was the first and only country to cut them. It is not complicated; farmers were receiving \$5 billion in subsidies and then, supposedly because of the WTO, everything had to be cut. That was not what happened in the United States or in Europe. It looks as if the government used the treaties that were supposed to enable us to manage as a pretext to do nothing further.

My colleague who spoke previously pointed out that when Newfoundland joined Confederation in 1949 it brought with it an absolutely extraordinary resource. In one of the speeches given last October when this motion was debated the first time, I read that the revenue Newfoundland could be making from the fishery, had it been properly managed, would today be around \$3 billion.

There once were many fish around Newfoundland—an enormous quantity of fish. We know that fish travel and that what is found off Newfoundland ends up coming into the Gulf. It had a positive effect along the coast of the Maritimes and right into the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

When people realized that there were no fish left, no cod or flounder left, in Newfoundland and that moratoriums had to be imposed, it was quite obvious that there were no cod left in the Gulf of St. Lawrence either. The fish left Newfoundland for the gulf.

Mismanagement leads to disastrous consequences. A few years ago, the government injected \$3 billion into the budget to reorient regional economies. It is all fine and well to help fishermen learn a new trade, but what about the boats they own, the training they do not necessarily have, and the lack of motivation in young people?

I live by the sea. I would not like to have to move into the heart of a concrete jungle. I would probably suffocate, because I have always lived by the sea and breathed the salt air.

When a government lets a region destroy itself, the future of Canada is in serious trouble. The government is supposed to bring about change. It would be an enormous change if the new Minister of Fisheries and Oceans took the time to read the two unanimous reports. The Bloc Québécois and all the other parties unanimously approved the recommendations in these reports. I invite the new Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to read them and then do what is best for Canada.

• (1630)

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the members of the committee, especially my colleague from St. John's West who put forward this motion in the House of Commons.

This is a motion of unimaginable importance. It is intended to extend the 200-mile limit in order to include the Flemish Cap and the Nose and Tail of the Grand Banks. That is the jargon used by all the fishermen and people in the fishing industry, especially in Newfoundland and Labrador.

This is nothing new. This is not something that started in 1995. When I was the union representative in 1988, they were already talking about protecting the 200-mile limit. At the time, they were already saying that a mistake had been made. The international community is not monitoring the 200-mile limit where there is a possibility of saving our fish stocks.

This did not just affect Newfoundland and Labrador, but also Nova Scotia, Quebec and New Brunswick. As the member for Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis said, fish swim, they move around and go into the gulf. It is not for nothing that the stock is so diminished today.

That is why the motion put forward by the member for St. John's West is important. He is asking the government to protect these waters.

How could the international community be against conservation and for the well-being of all the communities? This is the government's responsibility. It is sad to see that the parliamentary committees have made so many recommendations that the government has never supported.

I remember that when George Baker was Chair of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, all the political parties had made recommendations on the fisheries. Then, sadly, George Baker did not even come to the House the day the vote was held because he did not have the support of his government, the Liberal government, to protect the fish stocks.

That hurt some of the communities.

[*English*]

It hurt people. It hurt the fishermen, but it hurt the communities too. It hurt communities because people had to leave their houses in Newfoundland and Labrador and move somewhere else to find a job. An unbelievable number of people lost their jobs in the fishing industry.

Newfoundlanders have lived off the fishing industry for a long time. Newfoundland was welcomed when it joined Canada. Was Newfoundland asked to join because Canada wanted it to be a part of

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the country, or was it asked because Canada wanted its fish stock? Now that Canada has Newfoundland's fish stock it does not seem to care anymore. That is the sad part.

Our country could do something collectively to change the rules to protect our fish stock. It could be done. Something is wrong when the parliamentary committee meets time after time and comes back with the same recommendations.

In 1988, when I was a representative of the union, we had a problem in the fishery. We talked about the 200 mile limit at that time. We talked about the nose and tail of the Grand Banks and the 200 mile limit. We talked about protecting the fish stock. That did not start in 1995. It did not start in 1999. Surely it did not start in 2004.

We made requests at that time. We appealed to the Conservative government at that time. If we were to look at the record, we would see that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador appealed to the federal government asking for help to save the fishing industry. That has still not been done.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

It is unfortunate considering all the work done by the parliamentary committee, which traveled along the entire Atlantic coast to meet the workers in this industry and all the other stakeholders. This Parliament authorized the committee to travel throughout Atlantic Canada to meet and talk to all the stakeholders. The committee was supposed to return to Parliament with recommendations for the federal government. The federal government remains silent on this issue. I withdraw that; it is not that it is silent, but it is not clearly supporting these motions in the House of Commons. It is voting against the motions and bills that could help fishermen and plant workers. Plant workers have also been affected by this situation.

Fishing is not easy. It is not easy to live in a community dependent on fishing. I have said this over and over again. Throughout Canada, people are happy when they order a nice piece of cod, lobster or flounder. They enjoy this sort of seafood from our regions, from Newfoundland and Labrador, Quebec, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, as well as British Columbia.

We must be able to help and agree to recommendations made by people who work so hard to come to the House and share them with us.

What the government has decided to do instead, particularly the government in power since December, is to announce to the community that 600 employees at Fisheries and Oceans will be laid off. That is unacceptable.

At a time when the fishery is in trouble, when fish stocks are at their lowest, when those stocks need to be protected and helped to return to normal levels, that is when more people are needed to help fix things. At the same time, we need more scientists who can work with the fishermen.

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Instead, the government is saying that when a group is having trouble, there will be cuts. That is what will be done. They will not receive the assistance they need. It is a disgrace for the government to make such decisions. I am certain that the communities dependent on fishing disagree with this decision.

We should instead be able to get together and consider the committees' recommendations. The current government with a new Prime Minister of Canada at the helm, has said it will be more open and provide more opportunities to committees to work together to make our Parliament more democratic. When the committee arrives with recommendations, the government party is the first to vote against them. Yet, no division was detected at this committee.

When George Baker was chair of the committee, he did not come to the House to vote. Another member of the committee—that had voted unanimously in favour of the recommendation—came to the House and voted against his own recommendation. He did so because he had been told how to vote by the government.

With respect to the motion put forward by the member for St. John's West, I am anxious to see, in the Prime Minister's new era, whether the latter will tell his members to vote in favour of the motion in order to build up stocks that are needed on the Grand Banks, to protect them and bring them back up to their initial level, and not to allow everything to end up in international waters where we will lose and continue to lose this industry that is so important for the communities in New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, St. John's, Newfoundland, and Quebec.

The NDP will be voting in favour of the motion put forward by the member for St. John's West. Let us hope the government will do so too.

• (1640)

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Canada-U.S.), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as an Atlantic Canadian and as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister for Canada-U.S. relations, I welcome the opportunity to address the House today on this important issue. It is an issue of resource management, multilateralism, and international cooperation.

I reiterate that the government's commitment is to achieve lasting improvements in the way the fisheries are managed beyond Canada's 200 mile limit.

I would like to thank the hon. member for St. John's West for his ongoing interest in this issue. Beyond that, I want to thank the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans for its recent reports and recommendations which have been given careful consideration by the government.

The motion before the House today asks that the Government of Canada take immediate action to extend custodial management over the nose and tail of the Grand Banks.

The Prime Minister and the Government of Canada recognize that foreign overfishing of straddling stocks on the nose and tail of the Grand Banks and Flemish Cap is a serious issue and requires immediate action. That is why the government is working with our international partners to resolve this issue. We are committed to

working cooperatively with other countries to manage our oceans and fisheries.

This approach has received an endorsement in fact from the former leader of the Alliance Party. The current leadership candidate for the Conservative Party and member for Calgary Southwest wrote just last month in the Moncton *Times and Transcript* that he would "endeavour to substantially reform the North Atlantic Fisheries Organization so that Canada's fish stocks would be better protected" and he would "reserve the right to take unilateral action to protect them if these international arrangements fail".

Just to make it clear to our colleagues here today, the former leader of the Canadian Alliance and perhaps future leader of the Conservative Party is in complete agreement with the government's position, that we must work to make the existing multilateral approach under NAFO work before we take unilateral action.

Canadians want their government to be an effective advocate for conservation and sustainable use. To do so, we need to be at the decision making table. That is the only way we can bring a brighter future and a sustainable future for our fishing communities.

Canada continues bilateral consultations with our partners in NAFO to advance the case that there is an urgent need for vessels to follow NAFO's rules and for governments to take action when these rules are violated.

In November Canada ratified the United Nations convention on the law of the sea, an action which will allow us to claim international recognition of the limits of our continental shelf.

Canada is not alone in wanting to change the way fish stocks are managed on the high seas. In December the European Union signed on to the United Nations fish stocks agreement. We are confident that we can make NAFO more effective and that a change is imminent with the implementation of the UN fish stocks agreement.

We must continue to work with our international partners to achieve real and lasting change. However, we will be looking for results and all options will be considered in dealing with this.

In January the Prime Minister discussed the issue of overfishing in international waters at the world economic forum in Davos. The government has been sending a firm message to NAFO partners that there is an urgent need for vessels to comply with NAFO's rules and for governments to take responsibility and accountability when these rules are violated.

All NAFO parties share a responsibility to ensure the rules of the fishery are being followed. At the same time, we have a responsibility to ensure that those who do not follow the rules are sanctioned and a responsibility to make sustainable development our number one priority for the future.

Currently international leadership is in support of conservation and sustainability of fish stocks on the high seas. However, by acting unilaterally, as this motion suggests, we risk compromising our international alliances and reputation as a leader in the cooperative management of fisheries.

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I have consulted with fisheries industry representatives who agree with this analysis. Canada, over a long period of time, has developed an enviable reputation in international affairs. In one fell swoop, this proposal, if implemented, could threaten that reputation. We need to be realistic about an action that would be viewed by the international community as contrary to customary international law and would be strongly resisted by countries that fish outside the 200 mile limit.

• (1645)

Custodial management would take us years to accomplish, and establishing control and authority over disputed areas could take even longer. In the meantime, our influence and our ability to achieve our objectives in NAFO as well as in other international organizations could seriously be diminished.

The government recognizes that the preservation and protection of fish stocks is a serious matter. It is an initiative that must be addressed in a manner that enhances rather than endangers Canada's enviable international reputation as a country that respects multilateralism and works within multilateral organizations to defend Canadian interests.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans is currently developing a new strategic direction to make key changes and to put Canada in the best possible position to influence NAFO. A working group has been established with federal, provincial and industry advisers to examine options and develop a strategic direction forward.

I am confident that the new enforcement strategy will give Canada the tools it needs to significantly reduce foreign overfishing beyond our 200 mile limit. Armed with this strategy, Canada will act with strength without undermining our international relations or relinquishing our support of NAFO.

I can ensure all members that the Government of Canada is prepared to do whatever it takes to address the serious issue of foreign overfishing. Our first approach must be to build on some recent changes that bode well for Canada's ability to advance its interests within NAFO.

Additionally, our government is developing a strategy that will address foreign overfishing, one that will go much further than the member's motion calling for custodial management. I think the hon. member will be pleased with that result and again, I commend him for his interest in this issue.

In particular, earlier this week we recognized overwhelmingly in the House Canada's support for multilateral approaches in defending Canada's interests when the Secretary-General of the United Nations was here in the House and when we had support from all political parties for that multilateral approach. It is important that we consider that consistency in terms of Canada's reputation as a country that does pursue its domestic and international goals through multilateral approaches when we are considering policies to protect our fisheries. Clearly, support for and negotiation within NAFO is consistent with that goal when we are defending Canadian interests in our fisheries.

Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say a few words on this motion which calls on Canada to assume custodial management over the nose and tail of the Grand Banks and the Flemish Cap. The real problem revolves around the fact that fish roam the entire expanse of the continental shelf, which

is irregular in shape, while the laws of nations governing fisheries extend only out to 200 miles.

The nose and tail of the Grand Banks and the Flemish Cap are outside the 200 mile limit and are subject to the laws of NAFO. Outside the 200 mile limit we are supposed to let fisheries violators be tried in their own courts. Foreign courts have been notoriously slack in punishing their nationals for rules broken off of our shores, an ocean away.

The Northwest Atlantic ground fishery was the greatest fishery in the world. For a long time this fishery fed the world. We brought this fishery into Confederation back in 1949. A combination of neglect by Ottawa and rampant foreign overfishing over the past few decades has led to the diminishing of the stocks. Not only are these stocks being diminished, but they are being devastated as well.

The northern cod has been pushed to the brink of extinction. This has been devastating to the economies of many coastal communities in Newfoundland and Labrador in particular and in Atlantic Canada in general. This is more than a local problem; it is a Canadian problem. These fisheries are a very important world food source that some nations and fishing interests have nearly destroyed. Canada has a duty not only to its own people but also to the people of the world to intercede before it is too late.

I said earlier that the failure of the northern cod fishery devastated many coastal communities. It and certain changes to the EI system were really responsible for about 50,000 people leaving my province over the last decade or so. It has had a very bad effect on us. Had Canada not blown our fisheries, many of those people would not have had to leave the many outport communities in Newfoundland and Labrador and settle in other parts of Canada, namely, Fort McMurray and many other places.

When we say that Canada should extend custodial management outside the 200 mile limit, that does not mean we are pleased with the management inside the 200 mile limit, because the management inside has been very bad as well. Ottawa has never taken the fishery seriously in Newfoundland and Labrador. It has never taken the fishery seriously in Atlantic Canada. It readily trades fish quotas in exchange for market access for the manufacturing concerns of central Canada. Fisheries management in the overall scheme of things in Ottawa is not even on the stove, let alone on the front burner.

Yes, we did win a share of the say in the management of offshore oil and gas, a non-renewable resource. We are grateful for the power, but we still receive very little in the way of royalties. The federal government is doing a very bad job on managing our fisheries. It has done a very bad job generally in managing offshore oil and gas revenues, to which we are certainly entitled in our province.

Private Members' Business

•(1650)

I think it will go down in history as a great miscarriage of justice that has been done to Newfoundland and Labrador because of the bad management at fisheries.

I know my time is up, so thank you, Mr. Speaker, for those few words.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for St. John's East for his cooperation because the Chair would want to safeguard the final five minutes under right of reply for the mover and sponsor of this motion, the hon. member for St. John's West.

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me thank my colleagues, the member for St. John's East, the member for Skeena, and the member for Scarborough Southwest, the chair of the committee on fisheries and oceans, who has done a tremendous job in that position and has been very strong on this issue.

[*Translation*]

I would also like to thank my good friend, the hon. member for Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, and my friend, the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst.

[*English*]

These people have shown today their knowledge and support for what we are asking, that Canada take control, for a change, of a resource that is really ours, that swims on Canada's continental shelf and that has been abused for years.

I do not intend to omit the parliamentary secretary, my friend from Kings—Hants, who perhaps in his new life looks upon the world a bit differently than he did when he was over on this side of the House. It is amazing how one's vision of international cooperation changes when one crosses the floor. The member was very strong in his support of what we were doing and now we hear the government tune, "We are going to deal with this issue".

I like country and western music. One of my old favourites is a fellow by the name of Johnny Horton, have mercy on him. One of the songs he used to sing was "It's the same old tale that the crow told me, way down yonder by the sycamore tree".

I have heard for years and years, "We are going to do something". I challenge the member and I challenge anybody to look at the correspondence that has taken place, to look at the initiatives that have been taken between the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the government generally and NAFO in relation to overfishing. They will see about the same amount of activity as we have seen action taken on vessels that have been issued citations.

In conclusion, I will give a couple of reasons that we need to take some action in relation to our policing and control of the nose and tail and the Flemish Cap. I refer to two boats.

The *Olga* was arrested and brought into Newfoundland port. They found in the hold of that boat tonnes of cod, a species under moratorium. The boat was sent back home. Somebody was supposed to deal with the boat. The standing committee, when visiting Norway and Iceland last year, found the boat tied up in Iceland. When asked what action had been taken with the boat, with the skipper and with the company, the government's response was, "We do not know. We

have done a search. We do not know what action has been taken". The *Olga* was also charged with polluting our waters.

The case will go to court. Millions of dollars, perhaps, will be spent and what are we going to get? Nothing, because the company has gone bankrupt, the boat is up for sale and of course our waters are polluted and our fish are gone.

The other boat is the *Santa Mafalda*. Four times in the last couple of years that boat has been issued citations. One was for fishing inside our 200 mile limit, not on the nose and tail but inside the 200 mile limit. What happened? The boat was sent back home and a warrant was issued for the captain's arrest. Following that incident inside our waters, the boat was stopped again and was issued a citation. They could not arrest the captain because even though the original offence had occurred months before, the documentation had not yet come before the courts. Four times, four citations and nothing was done. The boat continues to fish in our waters.

Three hundred citations have been issued in the last 10 years, 30 a year and no action. Why are we asking Canada to do something? Because nothing has been done. The government does not intend to do anything unless we force it into action. That is what it is all about.

There are the unanimous reports from the standing committee and the unanimous report from the all party committee. Everybody says to do something, except a few key people in government. Of course, they are the ones who will make the decision, but let me just remind them, that the people might make the decision for them.

•(1655)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 4:58 p.m., the hour provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired.

[*English*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion 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 nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 93 the division stands deferred until Wednesday, March 24, 2004, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

Pursuant to order made Monday, March 8, the House shall now resolve itself into committee of the whole to consider Government Business No. 4. I do now leave the chair for the House to go into committee of the whole.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1700)

[English]

HAITI

(House in committee of the whole on Government Business No. 4, Mr. Kilger in the chair)

Hon. Bill Graham (for the Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons) moved:

That this Committee take note of the situation in Haiti.

He said: Mr. Chair, during these very difficult times for the Haitian people, Canadians have been anxiously watching events there unfold while sharing in the concerns of our important Haitian community here at home. It was therefore important for us to discuss these matters in the House tonight.

Although the situation in Haiti is stabilizing and the appointment of a prime minister yesterday is a positive step forward, it remains fragile. Ultimately, Haitians themselves must determine the way forward by working together to restore democratic governance, the rule of law and the protection of human rights and freedoms.

However the Haitian people are not alone in facing this challenge, not today and not in the months and years to come. As the Prime Minister has affirmed, Canada is committed to working with the international community in helping Haiti to restore public order and to succeed over the long term to achieve democratic institutions and sustainable development.

Of course, the recent events in Haiti are not ones that Canada or any other country wish to see happen. As this crisis developed we worked actively with others in the international community to defuse it.

At the special summit of the Americas in Monterrey, the Prime Minister and I met with CARICOM leaders and discussed the situation in Haiti. At that time the Prime Minister made a commitment that Canada would be there with them to help the Haitian people out of their desperate situation.

Over the next weeks, as the crisis intensified, I spoke very often to the CARICOM foreign ministers, as well as to Colin Powell, Dominique de Villepin and César Gauria. The Prime Minister actively engaged his counterparts in the region as well.

Our friends in CARICOM worked intensively to develop their plan toward a political solution. Their plan was endorsed by ourselves, by the OAS and then by the Francophonie through the assistance of my colleague, the Minister Responsible for the Francophonie and President of the Privy Council, by the presidency of the United Nations General Assembly, and by the United States.

However in Haiti itself, unfortunately, all sides resisted accepting the plan and when President Aristide was won over, the negotiated political solution envisaged by CARICOM could not be obtained.

We followed events closely. We used all our diplomatic efforts to promote the CARICOM plan. When it broke down, some urged a military intervention at that time. However all concerned parties were agreed that any intervention in Haiti required a broad coalition

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of forces with the necessary capacity and acting with international legitimacy.

No country with military capacity was willing to act or, I put it to you, Mr. Chair, should have acted, in the absence of political conditions in Haiti that would have both ensured the success of the mission and reduced the risks that we were asking of the brave men and women of our armed forces.

Today in retrospect, certain voices speak of the circumstances of Mr. Aristide's departure as constituting a form of coup d'état. Of course, his decision was the result of the deteriorating security situation in his country and he was motivated, as he said in his resignation letter, by a desire to avoid a potentially bloody civil war. That letter clearly indicates that it was his decision to leave and, to his credit, it was a decision that spared his nation worse violence, indeed the possibility of a humanitarian catastrophe.

Secretary General Annan answered a question here yesterday about the circumstances of Aristide's departure. He said:

—the Security Council when it met had been given a letter that Aristide had resigned.... So the council acted on the basis of a letter of resignation and the transfer of power to the Chief Justice, and determined that because of the volatile environment, a multi-national force should go in and help stabilize the situation... I don't think there was anyone in the room who supported a coup d'état.

This was not a coup d'état. This was the Security Council of the United Nations acting with the highest authority of the charter to restore order in the area.

Today the door has been opened to a new determination by the international community to work with Haitians in developing their country's potential.

When the situation deteriorated across the island at the height of the crisis, Canadian diplomats and military personnel assisted Canadian and other civilian nationals desiring to leave Haiti. More than 100 Canadian forces personnel and four CC-130 Hercules aircraft evacuated about 350 people, including approximately 235 Canadian citizens.

Today some 450 of our armed personnel are joining the force that has been authorized by the Security Council to bring order to the island. We congratulate our troops on their brave and successful actions to date and wish them well as they work with others to restore order in Haiti. We look forward to hearing what the Minister of National Defence will be telling us this evening in this debate about their important actions in that field.

• (1705)

[Translation]

As this country is going through very difficult times in its history, I would like to reiterate that Canada will maintain its support to Haiti in the long term, to help rebuild that country. In light of the long-standing cooperation between Canada and Haiti, of the responsibility that we have in our own hemisphere, of our ties with Haiti through the Francophonie, and of the existence of a strong Haitian community here in Canada, I am convinced that all the members who are here want our country to play a leadership role to solve the current crisis and ease the transition towards democracy.

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I would like to remind the House of all that our country has already done for Haiti. For over 50 years, Canada has been cooperating with Haiti through religious communities and non-governmental organizations, through its official development assistance program and through its efforts to promote security and justice. We were also actively involved in the Organization of American States to solve the political crisis and to establish the conditions that will ensure good democratic governance on the island.

I would also like to point out that, during the recent crisis, Canada played a key role in ensuring the well-being of people, particularly civilians, in Haiti. We provided close to \$2 million in humanitarian and food aid through UN institutions, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Pan American Health Organization. The Canadian Forces also helped the Red Cross deliver medical supplies from Saint-Domingue to Port-au-Prince. As recently as yesterday, we announced \$5 million in humanitarian assistance.

Canada will also play a significant role in the stabilization force that the Security Council will establish in three months to replace the current multinational force. We will also continue to support the Organization of American States in its special mission for Haiti, and CARICOM in its efforts to ensure a peaceful and democratic future in that country. I want to assure the House and all Canadians that we will help the Haitian people by working with our partners from the Caribbean, the Americas, the Francophonie, the United Nations and the international financial institutions.

In addition, we will be there, on site, to help form a viable provisional government and organize the honest election that will follow. We will be there to ensure that human rights are respected and that a fair and efficient legal and criminal justice system is restored. We will be there to help restore free media and a democratic civil society. We will, of course, be there to respond to fundamental human needs such as food, health care and education. Agriculture, the energy sector, the financial system and the other foundations for economic development need to be promoted in the long term.

Of course, this will be no easy task. As we have learned from Canadian participation in Bosnia and Afghanistan, there is no instant solution for states in distress, or for assistance. The only solution for the Haitians themselves is to renounce violence for political and democratic cooperation. The only solution for the international community is to make a long term commitment to rebuild the institutions of a peaceful and efficient civil society. We Canadians are aware of how essential it is to succeed this time. We are going to do everything in our power to enable the Haitian people to build the democratic and prosperous country that they deserve and that Canadians want to see sharing our beloved hemisphere.

● (1710)

[*English*]

The Chair: I would remind members participating in this debate that this format allows for members to sit wherever they choose. The Chair will recognize anyone notwithstanding whether he or she is in the usual seat in the House.

There is now a period of 10 minutes for questions or comments. To the extent that questions and answers can be relatively brief it will allow for more members to participate in this important dialogue.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Chair, I appreciate the remarks by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. I will keep my question quite short out of respect for other members. I am sure they would like to address questions to him as well.

The minister briefly touched on a concern of mine at the end of his remarks: the need for a longer term commitment. My understanding, vague as it is, is that according to what the government has stated, the deployment of the troops phase of our assistance to the Haitians is to be 90 days, a three month deployment.

Given his remarks, I wonder what the minister envisions beyond those 90 days from a military perspective, and I also wonder if he could add any specifics in the way of requests of Canada that have come from the Haitians or the Americans or French who are involved there. The Secretary-General of the United Nations was just here for a visit and he may have suggested to our government or the minister or the Prime Minister what he is looking for in the way of specifics beyond the 90 days.

If the minister does have some of that information, I think it would certainly be incumbent upon him to enlighten Canadians, particularly the men and women of our military, as to what the likely commitment would be beyond three months.

Hon. Bill Graham: Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the member for Prince George—Peace River for an excellent question. This is certainly an issue that we have been considering. This morning I was discussing this very matter with the secretary of state of the United States. The Prime Minister, the Minister of National Defence and I had a long conversation with the Secretary-General of the United Nations yesterday. We are all concerned about precisely these issues.

Members will recall that Canada was in Haiti for a long time the last time. It took several years. It is clear that this mandate of the United Nations, this force, is for three months. I am sure the minister of defence could speak more to that issue, but my understanding of the international community with which we are having a conversation at this time is that the expectation is that we will move to a chapter 6 authorization for a follow-on force, or what the Secretary-General has called a pull-out force, after the end of the three month period. That force will be composed of more civilian types of police activities and will be less heavy on the military end.

I think that has a good possibility of being successful this time, because members will have noticed that the colonel in charge of the American forces was quoted this morning as saying that they have been given instructions to disarm people. One of the problems last time was that vast amounts of arms were allowed to collect there. I think there is going to be an effort by the international community for disarming.

That is not going to be all, the member will appreciate. I spoke in my speech not only of the military and peacekeeping dimension of what we are trying to do; there will be a lot of focus on institution building in Haiti. The problem is with the democratic institutions, which have broken down. Clearly there is going to have to be a considerable focus on rebuilding the judiciary and rebuilding the democratic institutions. We intend to do that by working with our colleagues in CARICOM. Being on the neighbouring islands, they tend to be the ones who know the political situation best.

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There are two dimensions to this issue. There is a peace and security side, which will be a chapter 7 resolution for three months—

The Chair: I am sorry to interrupt the minister, but time is of the essence.

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to hear the minister say that Canada's commitment will be long term. However, I want the minister to be a bit more committal in terms of the level and importance of this commitment.

The minister has specific information, but I read the newspapers and obtained additional information later. The minister knows as I do that, in 2003-04, Canada's aid to Haiti dropped from \$22 million last year to \$17 million this year. That is \$10 million less than in 2000-01.

I think it is extremely important to make a significant effort. I am going to focus on this. Currently, in addition to being the poorest country in our hemisphere, Haiti has just suffered looting that destroyed some of its community infrastructure.

Therefore, an effort that is properly managed and properly administered, naturally, but still a significant effort that could be sustained for a long time will be essential. The Secretary-General of the United Nations invited countries able to invest, the rich countries, to do so.

Hon. Bill Graham: Mr. Chair, I believe that is normal. The hon. member for Mercier is very well aware of the conditions we are talking about. I think that she understands that Canada had to reduce slightly its aid to Haiti in recent years, because of that country's lack of ability to absorb the aid. It was a governance problem.

For example, we have tried to train the police. We found that the money earmarked for the police did not go to the police. Thus, there was some question about how money was being spent.

We have supported NGOs and other agencies. The fact is that Haiti is our number one priority in the hemisphere. That said, it is obvious that it is difficult now to predict exactly what should be done. That is why we discussed with the Secretary-General yesterday and with Mr. Powell this morning, and with others as well to figure out what to do. I am sure we will also be talking with the financial institutions. Perhaps my colleague will be able to elaborate on that.

If conditions in Haiti are favourable, if there are conditions of governance that allow aid to reach the people and society to rebuild, as I said in my speech, the international community is prepared to act. Mr. Iglesias is prepared to act in behalf of the InterAmerican Development Bank. The Americans are prepared to act.

Still, before we spend our taxpayers' money, we must have the right conditions, and that is our priority right now.

[*English*]

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Chair, the minister has made reference to trying to cooperate with CARICOM, which yesterday or on the weekend, I believe, along with the government of South Africa, called for an international investigation

as to the manner, methodology and circumstances in which President Aristide was ousted.

Although I have heard the minister talk this evening about the president's resignation, there of course is a major dispute over just how that came about. I am wondering if the minister could address whether Canada would be prepared to encourage that type of international investigation as to how President Aristide came to be out of office.

Hon. Bill Graham: Mr. Chair, this morning I discussed this matter with my colleague from Jamaica, K.D. Knight. This is a preoccupation of many countries, but I have to frankly tell the hon. member that our preoccupation at this time is rebuilding Haiti. I am not convinced that a lot of focusing on past problems, on who did what to whom in the past, is going to advance what we have to do in Haiti, which surely is to rebuild the political climate in Haiti to enable us to have a rebuilding of the country.

It is a fragile democracy. It is a democracy that works with a lot of difficulty. It is clear that there are going to be proponents of President Aristide. There are going to be proponents of those who took up arms against him. Our desire at this time is to avoid replicating the conditions that led to Mr. Aristide's departure by encouraging that debate at this time in Haiti. Our efforts will be to say to the people of Haiti, "Put aside past quarrels. Let us build Haiti. Let us look to the future for the children, for the prospects of a decent society and a decent life".

If we focus on the past quarrels, we will not move forward into the future. I understand the hon. member's preoccupation with this issue, but I would advise and suggest that we should focus on the future rather than on the past. There are huge problems out there for us, the international community as a whole. If we focus on the past, if we get engaged and ground down in that, we might find that the international community will not be willing to come up with the money or put it into a situation which they do not believe is moving in a positive direction. That is the way in which I personally would advise the government to move.

• (1720)

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Chair, I have just a brief supplemental for the minister. Obviously one of the great concerns the Conservative Party has is about our already overstretched military, especially in light of its budget. I just wonder if the minister would answer this question: Whatever it is going to cost the Canadian taxpayers to assist Haiti, specifically the military component over the next 90 days, will the money be coming out of the existing Department of National Defence budget to cover it, or will it be coming from other funds made available from the government?

Hon. Bill Graham: Perhaps, Mr. Chair, if the hon. member would permit me, I could suggest that the Minister of National Defence, who will be speaking later in the debate, will be able to answer that question better than I can in terms of the actual budget of the military. I appreciate his concern about where the money is going to come from. I quite agree that this is an issue which we have to look at. We are very proud of what we are doing there and what we are achieving there, but we have to look at how that is done in the context of our resources as well.

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Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Chair, first I have some overriding comments related to what is happening with Haiti and to some things on which we should be focused. Then I would like to present some concerns. I have some questions, some of which will be rhetorical. I would suggest that this whole conflict has raised some questions in terms of Canadian foreign policy and how it is constructed and implemented.

First, we all agree and we say wholeheartedly that we want to see things in Haiti settled peacefully, as we do wherever there are places of conflict. If we can play a part in that, good.

Also, we want to recognize our troops who are there. As usual, whenever Canadian troops are abroad they distinguish themselves in terms of their courage, their bravery and their training and in how they conduct themselves. They are in fact ambassadors for Canada in very dangerous situations. Therefore we want to acknowledge our troops and commit to them our full support in every way we can.

We also acknowledge the benefits of Canada being involved in diplomatic processes in terms of trying to bring a settlement in that particular area.

We acknowledge the importance of protecting our citizens who are in Haiti, the many who are still there and those who needed to be safely evacuated.

I also have concerns, not just from people across Canada but even from my own constituency, related to children who right now are in orphanages in Haiti. There are families whose adoption processes have already gone through and have been approved, yet it seems to be difficult. These children are in a dangerous situation. Adoption processes have been approved, but they are still waiting for their passports. There should be some way, whether it is through our armed forces or our diplomats, in which we can recognize the danger that is involved. Is there some manner in which those children can be safely taken from a somewhat tenuous situation and joined with their soon to be adoptive parents? That would be those for whom the processes have gone through and everything has been approved.

Those are some of my overriding comments.

What the situation in Haiti has done is once again show the result of more than 10 years of reduction of resources to our armed forces. Though the commitment level and the training level of our forces are I think the highest in the world, our forces are limited in what they can do and in how long they can be maintained in another theatre of activity.

We raise this constantly in the House. We are raising it again today. We need this government to begin to replace and to put back. Our forces have been subjected to a drastic reduction of resources for over more than 10 years. I will even say that a government previous to this one actually began that reduction process, so I am not saying in a partisan way that it is just this government that has done it, but this has to be addressed. It affects how long we can have troops in an area. It shows how thinly they are spread out. We already have an incredible commitment in Afghanistan, where we should be. The whole problem of underfunding by the federal government is exacerbated every time a conflict comes up. We need to address that.

A fascinating question has arisen in this conflict in regard to Canada's involvement. Here is the question that it begs: What criteria do we as a nation use when we make a decision to send in armed forces, and armed forces that are prepared to use those arms? The minister has already said that there could be situations in which they have to literally disarm people in another nation. We have made a decision to send in troops and it begs that question: on what criteria?

Let us look back at very recent international history and another country, another leader, this time by the name of Milosevic, who had embarked on a campaign of ethnic cleansing. Some 8,000 people had been slaughtered under his direct command when Canada, along with some other nations and without UN Security Council approval, moved in there in a military way to stop what was happening.

● (1725)

Using a more recent and tragic example, our government determined not to have anything to do in the Iraq theatre, saying that we were opposed to regime change. I may have differences of opinion with that, but I accept that the government said that it was opposed to a regime change in Iraq, where there was a non-elected leader who was well on the way to setting the all-time record for mass slaughtering, abuse that went beyond description, attacking other countries, and gassing thousands of his own people to death. The coalition forces and the Red Crescent have discovered massive graves that go into the tens if not the hundreds of thousands.

Here we have Saddam Hussein, a non-elected monster of untold proportions in the Iraq situation. Our government stated that we were opposed to any regime change. All right, I accept that. I still do not know what the criteria were, but I accept that.

Now, we have an elected leader Aristide. We may not have wanted to vote for him. He may not be the type of person we would vote for. But the government makes a decision that there should be a regime change.

It is a serious question that we need to address. That decision was based on what criteria? We must have this discussion.

This leads right into my next point. Any time we are talking about troops being deployed, other than emergency action where there is no time to convene Parliament, these types of questions must be debated, must be looked into by members of Parliament, and consensus from Parliament must be achieved. When do we move into a country, when are we party to regime change—which we have been now, we are party to regime change in Haiti—and to what degree do we involve ourselves? These are the questions that this whole operation begs.

I say that recognizing that we had to send troops there. We had to protect Canadians; we had to evacuate Canadians. However, we actively have supported a regime change of an elected leader.

Yes, there have been some killings going on. It does not even touch the order of magnitude of what Milosevic or Saddam Hussein were doing.

It leads us to the other question, how much influence does Canada really have and how much can it have? Secretary-General Kofi Annan was just here addressing this, asking Canada to do more.

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A two-year operational base corps operational budget of the UN runs about \$3.1 billion, almost \$4 billion U.S. We contribute about \$53 million of that, about 1%. In terms of costs, Canada has contributed about 2.2% in peacekeeping operations that have been ongoing in the last year.

I would like to suggest that we can have influence if we are willing to articulate certain principles. When the Secretary-General was here and said Canada had to do more, he talked about poverty, for instance. There is poverty in Haiti. There is poverty, unfortunately and tragically, in many parts of the world. Do we just do more? Does that mean just more dollar dumping? Does that mean we take more Canadian taxpayer dollars and dump it into a situation often in which, and possibly in this case, a leader absconds with those funds, or banks them in Switzerland, or does something and it never gets to the people who really need it?

We support urgent humanitarian needs. We support the use of NGOs, in terms of money having a better chance of flowing to the people who really need it.

I would like to suggest that Canada could be very effective at the United Nations, and in these discussions, if we talked about the principles that lead to a have nation or a have not nation.

Have nations do not just happen and have not nations do not become impoverished just by the luck of the draw. The last century is filled with classic textbook cases of nations that became have nations because they established certain principles. I would suggest those principles would be individual freedoms: the freedom of speech, the freedom of religion, the freedom to be enterprising, and the freedom to own private property.

How often at the United Nations, or when we were in discussions with the Secretary-General or other countries, did we say and did we bring influence and even pressure on other regimes, other nations, whose elitist leaders did not want to put these principles in place?

We know they work if we look at the last century. North Korea and South Korea are an example. Here we have a population, obviously genetically and ethnically the same, with the same thousands of years of past history. One implements a regime which is not democratic and does not promote these principles; the others does. What do we have? Generally speaking, a higher standard of living.

• (1730)

The same comparison can be done with West Germany and East Germany, Taiwan and mainland China. The same comparison can be done with democratic Israel and its surrounding undemocratic neighbours. Here is one country with a relatively high quality of living and around it there are nations awash in oil but brimming in poverty.

I would like to encourage our minister and our government, not in a tangential reflective way, but in very clear ways at every opportunity at the United Nations, to challenge those nations which do not allow these individual freedoms to exist. That is the principal reason we have these crises of poverty. That is the way that in the mid and long term these crises can be avoided, if they would start to move on those principles with the encouragement of Canada. That is the way Canada could have a great influence at the United Nations.

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I wish to thank the hon. member very much for his comments.

I took from his speech that he agreed with our premise that Haiti was a situation in the hemisphere with a great crisis taking place, and Canada could not have stood back and not have intervened, in conjunction with other parties that were capable of doing it.

In terms of the principles which justify our action, in this case it was clear that we were willing to intervene. We were only willing to intervene if others that had the capacity were willing to intervene. We were not prepared to intervene by ourselves. Also, we were only willing to intervene in the case of international legitimacy.

As I said in my speech, that legitimacy was conferred by the Security Council resolution. I do not accept the member's point that this was a regime change, any more than I accepted his views about the issue of Baghdad.

If the member had clearly said, at the time of Baghdad, that his party was in favour of regime change, that might have been a different debate. However, members will recall that in that debate we were faced with the terror of weapons of mass destruction which were going to come and destroy us all at any moment. Nobody at that point in that debate was discussing the legitimacy of regime change and this was not a regime change.

Mr. Aristide resigned. The new president, as the chief justice, was sworn in in accordance with the constitution and the Security Council took it on that basis.

I do not quite accept that. I do accept the member's point that we have to be active in the United Nations about democracy and about building democracy. Ultimately, countries will not survive and Haiti will not survive if we cannot build democracy in Haiti. That is what we will all be called upon to do. It will be a very challenging process. I agree with the hon. member in that respect.

Mr. Stockwell Day: Mr. Chair, I am trying to distill the question from the observant remarks.

I will respond with a comment and a question. The minister has said that the only reason we went into Haiti was because there was some kind of international agreement. Is the minister saying that we would not have gone in to protect Canadians unless some other countries said it was all right to do so?

The point here is that Canada should never relinquish its sovereignty to any other country or to any other international body. Yes, as far as possible, let us work with other international organizations, including the United Nations. Yes, let us always look for ways that we can achieve things multilaterally.

Is the minister saying that unless other countries approved, we might not have sent our troops in to extricate Canadians from a difficult situation, that we would wait for, let us say, Finland or Thailand to say it was all right to go in and protect Canadians? These are the very things on which we need clarifications.

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I would suggest that this was clearly a regime change. We have Mr. Aristide, now from another country, encouraging his supporters to rise up and support his presidency. This was clearly a regime change. Whether we like to admit it or not, we took part.

This underlines my point that we need some clear criteria. When do we send our armed forces into another country to possibly take action, to disarm and possibly engage in combat, and protect our citizens? These questions go unanswered.

• (1735)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Coderre (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Minister responsible for la Francophonie and Minister responsible for the Office of Indian Residential Schools Resolution, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would have liked to have heard the comments of our colleague across the way on the future of Haiti itself. It is all very well to spout a lot of words, concepts and rhetoric, but I think my colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, has made it extremely clear that a distinction has to be made between the multilateral approach and the fact that we have certain responsibilities because Haiti is within our hemisphere.

I have met many members of the very large Haitian diaspora in Canada, particularly in Quebec. Close to 120,000 out of 150,000 are in Montreal. They called upon us to take action, that is to disarm. I am not referring to the regime, but to the people of Haiti. When they watch television, it hits very close to home for them, because their relatives are being killed back there.

I would like to hear what the opposition members have to propose in order to ensure that we can save Haiti in the long term, while fulfilling our obligations. Does the hon. member believe more should be invested in institutional reform, in education for the younger generations? One of the problems is that the reason why the chimeres exist is the poverty and violence.

If there is a focus on the very culture of democracy, education, training, and the dignity gained by being able to work again, would the member of the official opposition then agree that we invest more to save the Haitian people, once the situation has stabilized?

Mr. Stockwell Day: Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize that it is not only a question of rhetoric for soldiers and their families. It is not a question of rhetoric; this is a serious matter.

Here in Parliament we do not have a list of standards to follow when it comes to intervening in another country. It is not a question of rhetoric. We do not have a list for this purpose and that is dangerous because it gives the government the opportunity to change the way it acts from one day to the next with no reason.

It is also important to talk about the principles that I mentioned: freedom, the economy, the right to own property. It is very important that our government declare within the United Nations that these are fundamental principles, as is education, of course. Nonetheless, we do not have the opportunity to influence education when we are not there to promote the other fundamental principles. In addition to education there is also health.

At the United Nations Canada rarely talks about the principles of freedom in a way that would force dictators and other leaders to listen and be influenced.

• (1740)

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Chair, I would like to discuss this with my colleague on the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, with whom I have even travelled to countries where the political situation was difficult, although we never encountered anything similar to what was happening in Haiti when the UN forces went in. That is what I would like to discuss with him, and then ask him a question.

Is it not in a time like this, or the time we have just come through, that we need an organization like the UN Security Council? Some may say that it needs to be reformed, that countries like Brazil and India should counterbalance the big five, and I agree. Nevertheless, we need an organization with tested principles.

I would also like to remind him—and have his comments on this—that, in 1994, the UN authorized soldiers, 20,000 American soldiers, to restore President Aristide to power.

Is it not in times like this that we want to participate in UN activities and that we need this organization?

Mr. Stockwell Day: Mr. Chair, we do need such an organization, and we must collaborate with it, of course. However, we must also recognize that the UN is not a perfect organization.

For example, when in Rwanda, General Dallaire asked Kofi Annan to send armed forces to prevent the massacres, but the UN did not do as he asked.

Of course, we have to collaborate with these organizations, and also bring our suggestions to improve that organization in particular. Still, our sovereignty is very important. That is why it is essential to recognize that, if there is a need to protect Canadians, in Haiti for example, there must be criteria for action. Of course, we must collaborate, but we must recognize all the same that the UN is not—

The Chair: The hon. member for Mercier.

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first of all in this brief speech, I would like to express solidarity with the Haitians in Haiti and the Haitian community in Montreal, as well as the rest of the community, present in other parts of Quebec and instrumental in its growth, as I have pointed out before.

Even if the situation seems to have stabilized somewhat, we must agree that things are still very bad, judging by reports from the NGOs and the media. There is looting, and men, women and children are still dying. Security is not yet perfectly restored. The situation is still precarious.

This year was the 200th anniversary of Haitian independence. Such a sad event to take place during this anniversary year.

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I must make it clear to begin with that the Bloc Québécois not only accepts the UN's involvement in this difficult situation, we welcome it. I would like to read a few excerpts from the resolution adopted on February 29. The UN reacted quickly, and the Security Council met within hours of president Aristide's departure. The preamble to the resolution contains the following:

Stressing the need to create a secure environment in Haiti and the region that enables respect for human rights, including the well-being of civilians, and supports the mission of humanitarian workers...

Taking note of the resignation of Jean-Bertrand Aristide as President of Haiti and the swearing-in of President Boniface Alexandre as the acting President of Haiti in accordance with the Constitution of Haiti,

Acknowledging the appeal of the new President of Haiti for the urgent support of the international community to assist in restoring peace and security in Haiti and to further the constitutional political process now under way...

Determining that the situation in Haiti constitutes a threat to international peace and security and to stability in the Caribbean, especially through the potential outflow of people to other States in the subregion,

Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations...

This is why there are armed military personnel there. They move on to their intentions, but I will not read it all. It is worthwhile reading, however, and could act as a basis for action by the international community, Canada included.

I will take this opportunity to reply to one of the questions that the Minister of Foreign Affairs asked a while ago; do we not want Canada to be a leader? I say right away that I certainly would like Canada to be a leader. But I only hear our country talking like a leader. If we are not present, or if we do not invest enough, I will keep on asking the country to be a leader and reminding it that it must not only be a leader in words but in deeds as well.

This is an important point in the debate raised by ex-President Aristide. This must bother a lot of people in Haiti, but not only the Haitians, because it is also the case here and in South America. We know there are regimes that do not necessarily have the support of the American superpower. I am thinking of Argentina, of course. These declarations and these appeals by ex-President Aristide—if we rely on the UN resolution—are very troubling.

• (1745)

I must say that if this is what happened—if there was a kidnapping, as he claims—that would be unacceptable.

I take it as a fact that he resigned, based on what I read and heard in the early hours after his departure from Haiti. Moreover, I issued a statement to thank him for making that decision—a very courageous decision and the best one to get his country through this crisis.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs has asked us not to dwell on the past, but we must speak about the recent past. Like the hon. member opposite, I have received requests from members of the community, especially beginning in December when there was a real escalation of human rights violations in Haiti.

The NGOs of Quebec who have members in Haiti were terribly worried about the lives of the people who work for and with them down there. The human rights violations burst into view in a most disturbing way during the demonstration at the university on December 5. The rector of the university had his legs broken by supporters of President Aristide, the ones called “chimères”—who

operate under the benevolent eye of the police. Then things continued to escalate.

I was following the situation closely and, on that occasion, I urged the Canadian government to be more firm with President Aristide. The fact is that Canada took a long time to condemn the events that occurred at the university. In fact, the United States, France and other countries did so long before us.

I do not want to dwell on this situation, but I should point out that there was an escalation, which was again recently condemned by the issue table. Currently, the major problem is the presence of numerous weapons in Haiti. I know that the hon. member for Saint-Jean will talk about this. These are not just small calibre guns; there are also large calibre weapons. Aristide himself armed his supporters. We know that they are the ones who turned against him in Gonaïves. The rebels arrived with arms, and there were various groups. This is not to mention the banditry and all these private security forces.

The Minister of National Defence must reassure us regarding this issue. A disarmament process must take place. Otherwise, there can be no security and there cannot even be humanitarian work. Indeed, we will not be able to reach the regions that were cut off. We are told that access has not been restored everywhere.

We are still working on an emergency basis. Fortunately, we have this international force. However, it is working under extremely difficult conditions, as we saw during the Sunday protest with what happened close to the palace.

Haitian people need to hear this. They are the ones who will rebuild Haiti by establishing democratic institutions. However, they must be able to rely on the international community. First, the international community has a responsibility regarding the events that have occurred in recent years.

In 1994, when the UN authorized—we could get the resolution out again, but we do not have time to read it—the international forces to bring Aristide back, there was also a whole program, a plan. But we left quickly. That is why Kofi Annan asked us to be patient this time. He said that it would take at least 10 years. So, the international community has a responsibility in that it left.

I heard about what had happened, but I read it in the report prepared for CIDA on the training of police officers. We found that former President Aristide politicized all senior management positions in the police force. From that point on, the force was no longer an independent body that should operate at arm's length to ensure that the rights of all citizens are protected and respected. We saw the abuse that resulted from this situation. So, we will have to pledge to help—

• (1750)

The Deputy Chair: I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but her time is up. The hon. President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada.

Government Orders

Hon. Denis Coderre (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Minister responsible for la Francophonie and Minister responsible for the Office of Indian Residential Schools Resolution, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for taking part in this debate. It is not my intention to correct her, but only to inform her that, after the events of December 5, an important meeting, the Conférence ministérielle de la Francophonie, was held in Paris. Canada proposed a resolution of condemnation. Therefore, Canada also gave a response.

I want to come back to the future, because the past cannot be changed. During meetings with the diaspora, but also when I went to Port-au-Prince, we held discussions with numerous partners, including the opposition, and one reality remains: we must put an end to the eternal recommencement. Haiti has experienced 34 coups in 200 years. A viable and lasting solution needs to be found.

I would like the member to talk a little about the role of the international community. Mistakes were made in 1994. Everybody agrees on that. There is a great deal of talk about the institutional reform of education. I talked earlier about helping the younger generations. My colleague talked about agricultural reform. CIDA has done its job in that area, and this needs to continue, in my opinion.

However, because I am the minister responsible for the Francophonie, I would like to know how, for example, she sees the role of various international organizations, such as the Francophonie, as Canada simultaneously fulfils its role, bilaterally, with Haiti.

Perhaps she could tell us more about her vision of the future and the role that the Francophonie or other organizations can play, while respecting the fact that Haitians want their own government, want an election held as soon as possible and want their own institutions? And how can we decide on what day our role ends and that country takes responsibility for governing itself, and avoid talk of interference in Haiti?

● (1755)

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Chair, I would say to the minister that this calls for at least a summit.

I want to start by putting the question back to the minister, although it is not a real question. I would like to ask him whether at the end of the disturbing weekend of February 28 and 29, he heard Dany Laferrière, whose name we can use because he is a novelist, poet and artist. He is a Haitian who has not lived in Haiti for some time, but is deeply committed and loves his people. It was extraordinary how he explained this to us. He told us that there have been 34 coups d'état. He said that Haitians were once slaves who became independent 200 years ago, but resisted.

I had the opportunity to be on the same set with him at RDI and I was telling Mr. Drainville that the Haitian community here helped build Quebec and that we must help them build Haiti. I quoted Louis Joinet, from the UN, who said he had hope because of all the people who managed to survive under difficult conditions, including magistrates.

Dany Laferrière said that Haitians are extraordinary, that they needed resources and that they obtained them under difficult conditions. We must not forget, however, that more than 60% are illiterate. It is not for nothing that there are few newspapers and the radio is very popular there.

To answer the question, I would say there are two main aspects, one being the enormous need. It will take more than investments of \$25 million a year. There are needs in education and infrastructure. I am sorry to say, but they need sewers. This is essential or there will be a serious health problem. They talk about rebuilding infrastructure, but in most cases it is a matter of building, period.

There are environmental problems. I was told that the forest cover is only 1% or 3%. In that respect as well, the international community has a responsibility, but we will not get into that.

Basic investments need to be made. Plans need to be made by Haitians with the help of experts, but major investments are needed.

The other aspect is the cooperation of the international community, cooperation between countries. One of the bad things about international aid is that each party does its own thing. There is no synergy and perhaps there is a loss of efficiency, if not actual waste.

There needs to be smart funding, but political will as well. We are counting on the government and we will remind it of that obligation.

● (1800)

[English]

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Chair, one of the things which, to be quite honest, really disappointed me was when the Prime Minister flew down to the United Nations to make a presentation and then took that opportunity to announce that Canada would be participating in assisting the Haitians. I said at the time that certainly I think all Canadians want to help Haiti through this difficult time, and certainly the Conservative Party of Canada is no exception to that.

Having said that, I was absolutely dismayed when he held a press conference in New York and reporters put questions to him, which I thought were valid questions, and he had no idea what he was committing our nation and our young men and women in the armed forces to. He did not know how many troops, where they would come from, whose command they would be under, what the terms of engagement would be, how much it would cost, or where the money would come from. Frankly he did not know anything. He was committing our country to this mission with no understanding of what the mission would be, how it would be accomplished or who would take it on.

I was equally dismayed when I put a question to the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the start of this debate following his presentation. He could not answer whether our troop commitment to Haiti would be funded out of the existing limited resources of the Department of National Defence or whether this would be an extra fund that was approved by cabinet and provided to pay for this mission to Haiti.

Government Orders

It seems to me that the government is taking a very haphazard approach to this, as it often does with foreign affairs and foreign commitments. I wonder if the member has equal concerns about the way in which the Prime Minister seems to follow in the steps of his predecessor, making up foreign policy in front of a television camera.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for his question. This is, of course, a matter of concern, but my concern was that we have heard the Prime Minister speak of Canada playing a lead role, yet he did not know how many troops would be sent and when.

Last Friday, I received a briefing—as you no doubt did as well—and asked when we would know the date of departure of the troops and the size of the contingent. Even though the person I was talking to was not just anybody, his answer was “I cannot tell you that yet”.

As I said to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, it is all very well for Canada to style itself as a leader, but it must actually be one as well. It seems to me that this will require a fair amount of reorganization. In this instance, they have not walked the walk, but just talked the talk. I have issued a press release in which I stated that the Haitians would have been in a fine mess if they had waited for the Canadian army to defend them. That is not just rhetoric, it is the truth.

Fortunately, they are now there. When the Canadians are there, they are good. The Haitians will reap the benefits and can count on their help in particular with the disarmament aspect. Hon. members will agree with me that, without that, everything else will be pointless and the situation will perhaps even end up worse than before.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Chair, I would like to begin by asking a question. Why is it necessary for Canada to do something about Haiti? I can answer simply that we have many reasons. It is the only other francophone country in this hemisphere. It is the poorest country in this hemisphere.

As my colleague from the Bloc has mentioned, there is a very large Haitian community in Montreal. They live here in Canada. They are citizens.

● (1805)

[*English*]

I have a particular connection because one of the orphanages in Haiti has been extensively funded by the Windsor-Essex County community. I think that is true of a number of communities across the country. As a country and as individuals in smaller communities, we have reached out to Haiti.

[*Translation*]

Other hon. members have stated that there have now been 34 coups d'état since the country achieved independence two centuries ago. This is the second coup d'état against President Aristide.

[*English*]

I was disturbed by the response to my question from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and I think he repeated it at another point in his responses. He said that we should just forget about the history, that we do not want to go back and revisit that.

The reality is that the other countries of Caricom throughout the Caribbean and Central and South America are not at all happy about Canada's role. I do not think I am overstating it, but a good number of those countries see Canada, France and the United States as being part of an occupying force. We have significantly damaged our long term relationship with those countries.

I was particularly concerned when I heard the minister again speaking in terms of it being a fragile democracy. He may have been using it as a euphemism or as an excuse, but it sounded too much like the argument put forward by President Bush and his administration, that they do not feel any responsibility for, as they put it, failed elected leaders. They get to determine who is a failed elected leader. If we are going down that road with the Americans, then we are very much endangering our relationship with Caricom.

We have heard a good deal in the media and to some degree from members this evening about elections in Haiti. When we go back and look at the history, there were no complaints about the 2000 election when President Aristide was re-elected overwhelmingly. The methodology that was used was only complained about after the fact, by the U.S. and the OAS, but not before. It was simply used as an excuse.

It was interesting to hear the comments from the member from the Conservative Party who used the term “regime change”. That is very much what occurred. To suggest that President Aristide voluntarily resigned when he had a gun pointed at his head, figuratively speaking of course, is just playing with semantics. For us to say that we could find the wherewithal to move troops in, and I am pointing the finger not only at Canada but at France and the United States, at the drop of a hat at the time when he was gone and could not do anything to help protect the democracy that was there before the rebel attack, we have heard from all members their concern about this. I share in their concern as well.

I mentioned earlier a community in my area that has been very generous in helping an orphanage in Haiti. One of our priests is in Haiti and has refused to leave. He certainly was in danger.

We knew of the violence that was going on. The solution to that violence was not ousting the president. The solution was moving in an international multilateral force that would have supported the government and democracy. What we in fact have said to the whole hemisphere is that if enough violent opposition could be mounted, we would see that the elected government would go and we would help replace it. That is the message out there right now.

I want to make a point in terms of history and that is why I am so concerned that the minister seems to be willing to forget it. Haiti is the poorest country in the hemisphere by far. The United States was controlling a large sum of money which was not paid into Haiti. This money could have gone a great distance in dealing with some of its economic problems.

● (1810)

That sum is \$650 million and it has been sitting unused, unavailable to them for over two and a half years now. We did not do anything about getting that money released for them.

Government Orders

[Translation]

The position of the New Democratic Party is that it is unacceptable to have sent in our army and unacceptable that we permitted the removal of Haiti's president, Mr. Aristide, thus ending his presidency. It is unacceptable.

We have a number of requests and suggestions. First, we want to have American forces replaced by a peacekeeping mission under the United Nations, as soon as possible.

We want to see an international force sent as well, also under the United Nations. Its mandate would be to disarm the population and find and destroy the many caches of arms in Haiti.

There must be a viable, long-term solution to Haiti's problems—its political and economic problems—including reparations. This solution must be primarily designed by the Haitian people.

It will be necessary for Canada to support and assist with transparent and honest elections in Haiti.

We ask for a return to full and complete democracy in Haiti, followed immediately by the freeing of \$650 million for economic and medical aid. This amount, now being withheld by the United States should be given to the Haitian government.

We also ask for Canadian and international long-term financial aid, and training for a professional police force in Haiti.

Finally, we ask for an inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the forced resignation of Mr. Aristide.

[English]

On that final point, again I would urge the minister, as I did in my question to him, that he consider seriously having Canada participate in insisting that this type of an inquiry go on so that we can determine in fact whether President Aristide left voluntarily or was forced out.

Hon. Denis Coderre (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Minister responsible for la Francophonie and Minister responsible for the Office of Indian Residential Schools Resolution, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I have tried to figure out and understand what the member has been telling us because I have been part of an international delegation. What we pushed for was to respect the CARICOM plan. The CARICOM plan was to be inclusive in a way where we could have a national union government and where the opposition and President Aristide would go forward.

The problem in the past, and it was a pretty rough discussion, was that President Aristide gave his word but he did not respect it. Nevertheless, we felt that because he was elected we should respect that, but he should have got involved in the CARICOM plan. When we talked to the Asian people, most of them felt that President Aristide should have stepped down.

First, my understanding of what the member is saying is that we should have sent the troops over when he was there. Therefore, we would have been on the president's side, which was against the CARICOM plan in a sense. We did not want to take a stand, but we wanted to bring people back together. Then we would have been able to disarm.

Second, does the member believe that the only way to have proceeded, which we are saying now, was to do exactly what we wanted to do, and that is to respect the CARICOM plan?

• (1815)

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Chair, there are two questions there. I have to say to my colleague across the aisle that he is rewriting history a bit. The reality is that ultimately President Aristide did agree to that plan. It was the rebels who refused to. Yes, at that point—

Hon. Denis Coderre: Opposition.

Mr. Joe Comartin: No, that is in fact what happened. It was at that point when the international community should have said that it was going in to support the elected government.

I want to take a second issue with the minister when he talks about his assessment of the support of President Aristide. Everything I have heard is that the country is badly divided. However, to suggest that there was overwhelming support for him leaving is not accurate as far as we can see from the facts.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Chair, I would just like to be very clear on where the member stands on the issue of the withdrawal of President Aristide from Haiti. Is he saying that he believes President Aristide's story, as it has come to light since he flew to Africa, that he did not voluntarily withdraw for the good of his country and to try to avoid bloodshed, but that the Americans basically kidnapped him and removed him from his country?

I have not seen any evidence to support that other than the word of President Aristide. Therefore, if the member is saying that and if he has some evidence that would support that, it would be great for the debate and for all members of all parties in the debate this evening to be made aware of that.

Mr. Joe Comartin: I do not think any of us know, Mr. Chair. I have indicated in my address this evening what the NDP is calling for, and that is there be an international inquiry, an investigation so we can determine whether President Aristide's version is accurate or is the American version accurate. We are calling for that only.

I do not think it is possible for anyone to know at a distance. I was not in the room, neither was the member and neither was anyone on the government side. There is no way of knowing what happened on February 28 and 29 when President Aristide signed that document and then left the country. However, we could find out by way of an international inquiry.

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Chair, further to that, since the member seems to be intent on pursuing the idea of an international inquiry, what exactly is he hoping to accomplish by that and does he believe that President Aristide was involved in some incredibly terrible human rights abuses of his own people while he was in power? If so, why would he be supportive of an inquiry? I do not understand the point of the inquiry unless it is somehow to put President Aristide back into the position of power in Haiti.

Government Orders

Given what I have seen of his human rights abuse record, I do not know why Canada, as a nation, would want to support putting President Aristide back into power. I do not think that is the long term answer to solving the incredible turmoil, unrest and bloodshed in Haiti.

• (1820)

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Chair it is not me alone who is calling for this. CARICOM has called for it and the government of South Africa has called for it. The point is we as a country signed on to a democratic principle when we signed on in 2000, I think, to the Inter-American Democratic Charter. We signed that. We said that we would respect democracies.

Therefore, will we be able to say that we have a right to go in every time there is humanitarian abuses? I do not know if there have been. I have to say that to my friend. I have not been part of an inquiry into Haiti. I have not been there.

I say to the member that we have as a country a responsibility to honour democracy. There is nothing that I know of that tells me that it was not a proper election that elected him.

I see the Americans now beginning to build. Are we going to say that we have a right to determine what elected officials should be removed and which ones should be allowed to stay? I do not support that.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Coderre: Mr. Speaker, the member is putting on quite a performance, but the reality is very different. The reality is that President Aristide handed in his letter of resignation and said that, to prevent a bloodbath, he was leaving, but he can play politics after the fact.

I ask this of my colleague, who likes to jump the gun. Does this mean that, on December 5, when the president of the university had both his legs broken and when the police let the *chimères* kill students, he considered that acceptable? Are we to understand then that he supports without reservation everything that President Aristide did? Instead of continually thinking about holding inquiries because we think that the president left, should we not instead think about how to rebuild Haiti, ensure that the rebels and insurgents on all sides are disarmed and that, first and foremost, the people of Haiti are respected and protected?

[*English*]

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Chair, I have two answers. First, it is up to the people of Haiti to make that decision. Second, if we were that concerned about security in that country, why did we reduce the amount of money we were giving it? Why did we pull out the police forces we had there? We were trying to help establish a solid police force.

We are not without blame in this regard. However, who gets to make those decisions? It should not be a foreign country. It should be the people of Haiti.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was not able to hear everything my colleague said. However, I wanted to say that it is unacceptable if the president was kidnapped and deported.

However, based on what I know, and the UN resolution, which I read, this is not the case.

Consequently, if he asks for an inquiry and there is one, so much the better. Holding an inquiry in Haiti is one thing. However, we cannot concentrate on that right now. Haitians could decide to uncover the real story. However, currently, the UN unanimously recognized the new president. There is a new president and a new prime minister. Peace needs to be established and democratic institutions—

The Deputy Chair (Mr. Réginald Bélair, Lib.): I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but her time is up. The hon. member for Windsor—St. Clair has one minute to respond.

[*English*]

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Chair, the problem I have with the quick reaction of the UN was that it was overnight. He resigned and it passed a resolution within less than 24 hours. When the UN passed that resolution, it had not heard from President Aristide. All it knew was that he had signed a letter of resignation. I do not think we can draw too much from the position taken by the UN since it did not have the information of his position as he has now taken.

• (1825)

Hon. David Pratt (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I am very pleased to take part in this debate on the situation in Haiti. I am particularly pleased to have the opportunity to highlight Canada's significant contribution to the stabilization and rebuilding of that nation, a contribution all Canadians can and should take pride in.

Last Friday I announced the deployment of approximately 450 Canadian Forces personnel to Haiti for a period of 90 days.

[*Translation*]

This decision is consistent with Canada's longstanding commitment to promote security and stability in the western hemisphere. It also reflects the close ties we have with Haiti and our concern for its future.

[*English*]

Canadian troops are now deploying as part of the multinational interim force mandated by the United Nations Security Council to establish and maintain a secure and stable environment in Haiti. We are joining other nations, including the United States, France and Chile, in supporting the political process currently underway. We want to help bring peace and a lasting solution to this crisis.

As part of the multinational interim force, members of the Canadian Forces will help restore stability, assist in the delivery of humanitarian aid and support local police efforts. There is no doubt in my mind that the experience, dedication and professionalism of our men and women will allow them to make a meaningful contribution to the efforts of the coalition, as well as a very real difference in the lives of the Haitian people.

Government Orders

There are some in this House who have argued that the government should not have committed the Canadian Forces to this latest mission because they are overstretched and need a rest. To these people and to all Canadians, I would say that the deployment of our military abroad is never an easy decision for the government. It is always a balancing act between our existing operational requirements, the quality of life of our men and women in uniform, their training, their readiness and the risks that they face.

In making the decision to deploy our personnel abroad, the government takes into account the most current and relevant information and advice available, information and advice that many outside of defence do not have access to.

I can assure the House that we did not take this decision lightly. We considered carefully several important factors, such as which units were available, the level of training they had and when they were last deployed abroad. In the end, we asked ourselves two key questions. First, would the deployment put undue stress on our forces? Second, would it have a significant impact on our current or future operations?

After looking at the most recent and relevant information and taking into account the advice of the chief of defence staff, the government determined that the deployment of approximately 450 troops to Haiti for a period of 90 days would not put undue stress on our forces. We also determined that the deployment would not have a significant impact on our current international commitments, as the infantry company group that is deploying to Haiti was already on standby for a short notice mission such as this one.

It is also important to note that this deployment will not have a significant impact on the force regeneration efforts of the army and the air force, as we will soon be reducing our contribution to other operations. For example, in April we will draw down our presence in Bosnia, from approximately 1,200 troops to 600. In August we will reduce our contribution to the mission in Afghanistan from approximately 2,000 to in the order of about 500. In other words, we will be bringing home a good number of our people. Since the deployment to Haiti will be of relatively short duration, our land and air forces will be able to take advantage of the regeneration period that was planned for them for this fall. During that period they will have the opportunity to rest, train and focus on other priorities.

The government clearly recognizes that the Canadian Forces are stretched. We realize that we have asked a lot of our men and women in uniform over the past decade. As Minister of National Defence, I am very sensitive to the effects that our high operational tempo has had on our soldiers, sailors and air personnel.

If I could just add, as a member of the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs, I participated in the quality of life hearings that we did a number of years ago. The issue of a high operational tempo was very much on the minds of members of our forces.

Our people are the Canadian Forces' most valuable resource and we have a responsibility to take care of them. But the bottom line is that the chief of defence staff would not have recommended this mission, and the Prime Minister and I would not have agreed to it, unless we knew that the Canadian Forces could do it. Nor would we

have agreed to it had we thought it would negatively impact the men and women of the Canadian Forces, our current or future operations, or our regeneration efforts.

• (1830)

I would like to add that all indications from the men and women set to deploy to Haiti are that this is something they want to do. They are excited about this mission and the opportunity they have to make a difference in the lives of the Haitian people. I know that Canadians feel the same way. They understand the importance of the mission for Haiti and its people. They understand that something must be done to help them. They know that Canada is a fortunate country and that we have a responsibility to help others.

Of course, the deployment of the Canadian Forces is only one aspect of the government's overall strategy to assist Haiti. The Prime Minister has said many times that Canada will play a leadership role in the rebuilding of Haiti and that we will do what it takes to restore peace, order and good governance in the country and give hope to the Haitian people.

To that end, the government's strategy for Haiti will cover many fronts and will include political, security, humanitarian and long term reconstruction efforts. For example, Canada is actively engaged on the political front. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has been in regular contact with his American, French and Caribbean counterparts. We are also working closely with the United States, the Organization of American States and CARICOM. On the development side, CIDA will contribute to a series of long term aid and reconstruction projects.

This broad strategy for Haiti is another example of the government's three D approach to international affairs: defence, diplomacy and development. We are already implementing this approach in Afghanistan and, as I saw when I visited Kabul last month, it is producing very encouraging results.

[*Translation*]

We are confident that our approach will allow the government to achieve its objectives, not only with respect to security, but also with respect to politics and development.

[*English*]

When he spoke in this very chamber just yesterday, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan made a compelling case for a long term commitment to Haiti. He also recognized Canada's history of doing our part to bring peace and stability in the world.

The deployment of 450 Canadian Forces members and our broader three D approach will make a real difference in the lives of the people of Haiti now and over the longer term. I am certainly confident in the Canadian Forces' ability to carry out this mission. Canadians can and should be proud of the contribution our men and women in uniform will once again make to those who are in need.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Chair, first, allow me to congratulate the minister on the quality of his French. He has made a lot of progress. I remember he had difficulty with French, but now his pronunciation is very good. I congratulate him.

Government Orders

I would like to ask him about disarmament because he did not say much about it. Today the *New York Times* reported that the Americans have received a mandate—even though the UN resolution does not make a direct reference to it—to disarm the factions. A general or a colonel talked about active and reactive disarmament. It seems the U.S. intends to get as many weapons out of the picture as possible.

I wonder if the minister is able to tell us right now whether the Canadian Forces had roughly the same approach as the Americans. In other words, we no longer need to talk about Aristide's departure, about whether it is a coup d'état or not. He is no longer there. There are currently a lot of armed factions. Have Canadian soldiers been directed to disarm the factions of all these illegal weapons?

• (1835)

[*English*]

Hon. David Pratt: Mr. Chair, I appreciate the comments of the hon. member in connection with my French pronunciation, but I am not at a point where I would want to venture any further than that in terms of responding to his question in French.

I would say that the role of the Canadian Forces in Haiti at this point is one of what is called presence patrolling. They are going to be on the streets of Haitian towns and cities. They are going to be involved in protecting key institutions and protecting designated people as well, such as humanitarian aid workers, UN workers, that sort of thing.

From a disarmament standpoint, this is clearly one of the objectives that has been set out by the United Nations because ultimately, unless we disarm the factions that are involved in Haiti, we will not get the lasting peace that we need in Haiti. I see the disarmament process perhaps as being a bit of a longer project. I think we have to focus on ensuring in the early stages of this deployment that there is some security and stability on the ground and then move on to the disarmament projects from there.

We may end up over the course of the next number of months with a full-blown disarmament, demobilization and reintegration program, the DDR program that the United Nations is famous for in various theatres of conflict.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Chair, I appreciated the comments by the Minister of National Defence. I have a number of questions and I will put them fairly quickly in case others want to pose questions for the minister as well.

First of all, I would like to start from the premise he drew that somehow this deployment of 450 troops to Haiti would not constitute undue stress on our armed forces. He talked a bit about the high operational tempo. I see a contradiction there.

Obviously even a deployment of a short duration by a relatively small number is going to add to that high operational tempo that our armed forces have been experiencing for quite some time now. I would submit to the minister that despite his reassurances to our men and women in uniform, it will add significantly to the stress, certainly to the stress of those 450 individuals and to the families of those troops we are sending there. I want to also state the obvious, that our men and women in uniform always perform above and

beyond the call of duty and what is expected of them. That is the first question that I will pose.

The second and third questions are the ones that I posed to his colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, when he opened the debate this evening. Do we have any estimate of how much this three month deployment is going to cost? Is it going to be covered, at least the military component of it, under the existing Department of National Defence budget, or are other funds going to be made available either now or in the upcoming budget in a couple of weeks?

Finally, if, as the minister said in his speech, the chief of staff of our military recommended our commitment of 450 troops prior to the Prime Minister's announcement that he made in New York City at the United Nations, then why in heaven's name could the Prime Minister not answer any questions that the reporters posed to him that day about the size of the deployment, where the troops would come from, the terms of engagement, or whose command they were going to be under? He could not respond to any of those questions, yet the minister now expects us to believe that the recommendation came from the chief of staff to the Prime Minister. I am pleased that the Prime Minister is here tonight during the debate.

Hon. David Pratt: Mr. Chair, I am happy to respond to those questions.

The member of Parliament should be aware of the fact that we have in each region of the country what are called IRUs, immediate reaction units, that are set aside for contingencies. They are there to respond if we have a natural disaster. If there is any sort of an incident that requires the use of Canadian Forces, they are there to respond. It is a company sized unit. We have four of them across the country: one in the west, one in Ontario, one in Quebec and one in Atlantic Canada.

It just so happened that, in connection with the 2nd battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment, which is based in Gaagetown, the troops were already trained up in terms of non-combatant evacuation and they were ready for this type of operation.

Interestingly enough as well, they had not been on deployment for some time. The stars aligned as far as having these troops ready, willing and able to go. I gather from the press reports that I have seen, I have not spoken to officers directly, but the press reports of those people, the comments of those people have been very enthusiastic. They are anxious to get to Haiti.

We put a cost on the mission of about \$38 million at this point for the three month deployment. As I indicated during the press conference that we had when this was announced, there is some flexibility with respect to how long the troops will stay. We will be fully operationally capable and theatre operationally ready on March 21. It must be kept in mind as well that the clock started ticking on the interim force on February 29, but we still have troops to arrive in theatre. It is March 10 now and we still have troops to arrive in theatre over the course of the next seven to ten days or so and beyond then in terms of the national support and national command elements.

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With respect to the CDS and his recommendation, and based on what happened in Haiti with the decision of President Aristide to leave the country, we knew that we were into some planning efforts and exercises over the next few days. The first planning meeting that occurred was a very brief planning meeting in Miami on a Wednesday, to be followed by a larger planning meeting, which took into account the French, the Americans, the Chileans and ourselves, and I think there may have been some other countries.

The bottom line was that we had all of the information we needed at the end of that four or five hour long planning meeting. We had identified a force in terms of the 2nd battalion of the RCR, plus the helicopter detachment from 430 squadron. We were then able to put that immediately on the table with the planning group and then make the announcement last Friday.

We moved very quickly on this. As I have indicated in my comments, I am absolutely confident that this will not put any stress on existing deployment, future deployments or army regeneration.

• (1840)

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Chair, may I begin by joining my friend from Prince George—Peace River in noting the Prime Minister's presence in a take note debate. That does not happen very often. I hope it is a practice that he will continue so long as he is in that position. I want, as one member of Parliament, to commend him for being here in a debate of this kind.

Part of what is so distressing about the situation in Haiti is that we have seen it before. Too many in the House have been engaged in trying to help the people of Haiti come to some resolution of problems that seem to be more and more endemic and more difficult.

I certainly was involved with those issues during the time it was my privilege to be secretary of state for External Affairs and again as someone involved with the Carter centre, when President Carter was seeking to play a constructive role in the region.

Of course, the questions are important as to what happened to President Aristide and how it happened. But if those questions are important, the more important question is: What is going to happen to Haiti now? What is going to be done about it that is a response in the long term and not simply another intervention that three or four years later, in unhappy hindsight, it turns out to have been yet another failure?

If there has been an involvement by Canada, if there is a suspicion of an involvement by Canada that was either improper or is regarded as improper by some of the countries upon which we have to count in the region, then let the facts be known. It is important in any event but it is important certainly in terms of our ability to work with our allies and our traditional friends in that region.

I do not at all take away from the concern that has been expressed in the House about those questions. It seems to me simply that they are not the most urgent questions that have to be faced now.

I had the privilege a month ago, at the invitation of the Minister of National Defence, to visit Kabul in Afghanistan, where Canadian troops are deployed. I was impressed again by the excellence of our troops, by the fact that they are of course stretched near the limit.

They know that, the minister knows that and everyone in the House knows that.

There is, of course, a question of our military capacity. I for one am prepared to leave those decisions to the military experts to make. I can offer one observation. The Canadian troops I met in Kabul are the quintessential Canadian public servants. They want to serve their country. They want to serve the interests of their country. I do not think that one will hear them expressing an unusual concern about being sent on another mission, particularly if that mission has a result that turns out to be both constructive and durable.

However if there is an issue of military capacity, if there is an issue of how President Aristide came to depart Haiti, those are to the side. The real issue is the future of Haiti. The situation is tragic and what makes it more tragic is that it recurs and, frankly, as we look at the circumstances now in all of this uncertainty, there is no one with much confidence that we can do anything to stop it recurring in the future.

That is what we have to address as Canadians, because there is another sense in which the issue here is Canada. What do we do in the world? What difference do we make in the world? When do we step up and when do we step back? I know resources are tight and I also know, if it is any comfort to the government, that they are tighter now than when I had the honour to serve on the treasury benches.

There are real restrictions upon what a Government of Canada can do, but there is a sense in which resources are always tight and there is a sense, consequently, in which if one wants to do something, if something needs to be done, and particularly if we are the only people who can do it, that casts a new light upon the resources that are available to us.

I do not want to dwell on the past but I have had experience with some of these issues. I had experience decades ago now when thousands of people were afloat on the China Sea and Canada could have stepped back, and we did not step back. We embraced a larger number of boat people than I think any other country in the world, with the exception perhaps of Australia.

• (1845)

I recall at the time the great famines in Ethiopia, a country a long way away and not in our hemisphere, when Canada could have stepped back but it did not. It was not just the government that responded. In both of those cases, it was the government of the people of Canada which responded in imaginative and quite extraordinary ways.

I had the privilege to be involved in Canada's activities with respect to apartheid. Again, Canada could have stepped away but we did not step away.

Had we stepped away in any of those cases, there was no guarantee that anyone else would have stepped forward. Had no one else stepped forward, Rwanda and Burundi would not have been as exceptional as they now are in the record of the world.

Countries sometimes have to step forward when there is a particular call upon their capacities and their reputation.

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This is an extremely difficult situation in Haiti. The issue for us really is not whether we will send a certain number of troops for a certain number of days. That is important. The fundamental issue for us is whether we are going to engage seriously in this issue or not. Are we going to assume that the normal processes and the normal understandings should be trotted out again and tried again, or are we going to try to find something new and something different?

In each of the cases I cited before, Canada was prepared to look for something new and something different. Because we were prepared to stretch the envelope, to try to entertain some changes, we were able to make some small contribution to make a difference.

There are some very fundamental questions that we have to ask here. I share the profound respect for the sovereignty of nations, which I think is felt by everyone in the House, but let us ask a question: What is sovereignty to Haiti? There is a larger question: What is sovereignty to most failed states? In the case of Haiti, what does sovereignty mean to the people in Haiti in terms of their immediate future? Are we going to allow a definition whereby our great concern for sovereignty means that countries and individuals who might step in will find an excuse to step back? If that is the definition we apply to that concept, then we serve badly the concept and we certainly serve badly the people of Haiti.

We have to look at a couple of possibilities. The word trusteeship, as used in the United Nations context, has a bad history. It is not a word that people normally embrace. It also has a fairly specific history that applied to the transition from colonial roles of countries before. What it did was posit a role for an international body in unusual circumstances that could not simply provide a step toward a democratic process but could also establish some kind of interim means by which other social developments could occur.

Those of us who have been involved in encouraging democratic developments know that often we can get a democratic system in place and often an election can occur. It happened in Haiti. Often the result is not the profound kind of change that we were looking for.

There should be an examination by Canada's excellent diplomats and our excellent legal authorities as to whether there are some opportunities in the existing range of instruments available to the United Nations to apply those anew.

I am reminded of the case of East Timor and the case of Australia where an action was taken authorized by the United Nations in very extraordinary circumstances, circumstances in which normal procedures had broken down and violence had recurred. There needed to be an intervention that had some success and a way was found using the auspices of the United Nations to find that way.

I do not have a solution to propose except that if there was a time for Canadian imagination and commitment, this is the time. This is our hemisphere. This is our language. In very many cases, this is our family, very precisely, in the case of many individuals here. There is a great danger now that countries will do enough to be present but not enough to change the desperate decline that has become the characteristic of Haiti. This is an issue where Canada may be the only country that can make a real difference. I hope that the government will look very imaginatively into ways in which that might happen.

● (1850)

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Chair, very briefly, if I might, a comment, and then I would like to take advantage of the great experience of the former prime minister to ask him a question.

My comment in terms of the departure of Mr. Aristide is this. It is my understanding that the reason he said he was going to stay and then very shortly thereafter decided to go was in fact that apparently his own security force around him melted away. That is the understanding that at least we are given to believe. Canada obviously was not there and we do not have direct knowledge, but that is the way it is put to us.

I think the example of East Timor is a very good one. As the hon. member knows, what happened after about a year and a half is that the population wanted those who were in charge to leave, which is probably the best way to have it happen, to not stay too long under this kind of concept.

My question, however, for the hon. member is this. Given his experience, does he believe that if Canada were to develop and coordinate its great expertise in institution building, whether it be judiciary, police, or how a democracy should in fact operate, this is an area that Canada should invest in far more heavily as part of our overall foreign aid development? There are a number of failed states; we have seen what happened in Liberia. Does he in fact believe that there really is a niche where Canada can play a very important role if we are able to coordinate the skills we have?

Right Hon. Joe Clark: Mr. Chair, I very much believe that is the case. I believe that there is a range of new Canadian capacities that have not been reflected as much as they should be in esteemed institutions like the Department of Foreign Affairs, no matter how able the minister might have been at the time. I think our capacity in institution building is clearly one of those.

I was pleased to hear the Prime Minister in his address to the Speech from the Throne make reference to the use of high technology and Canadian biotechnology in particular in international development. I think that is the kind of new thinking that needs to be applied, and obviously it is relevant in this case.

The flag of alarm I want to raise is this. I do not think this is a case where we should be looking simply for an area where we should play a role, although I understand the Prime Minister put this in a larger context. My real concern is that unless Canada is prepared to frame that larger context and to provide the leadership in that larger context, it will not occur, and then we will be making our particular contribution to a venture that is doomed, that is not likely to succeed.

I believe that this is one of those events where there is an unusual opportunity and obligation for Canada that does not exist for other countries and that does not often or even always exist for us, but can well exist here.

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•(1855)

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Minister responsible for la Francophonie and Minister responsible for the Office of Indian Residential Schools Resolution, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think we can benefit from the experience of the former Prime Minister. I would like to go much further concerning the notion of leadership.

I think it is important to be respectful and to work in complementarity, for example with CARICOM. How does the hon. member see this notion of leadership, while effectively respecting this complementarity? It is also important to build a state in Haiti, to work directly with these people. Does this mean to work in a bilateral fashion with the interim government, or does it not really mean to continue working under CARICOM's plan which, in fact, includes all of the elements the hon. member mentioned earlier?

Right Hon. Joe Clark: Mr. Speaker, I believe that Canada's role rests precisely on our ability to work with various groups. What is lacking is leadership, the determination to have leadership that is lasting and not just temporary.

Of course, we must work with the authorities in place, and with our partners such as CARICOM and others. However, it is not France, the United States or another CARICOM member that can assume this leadership. Canada is the only country that can do so.

[English]

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Chair, it is an honour and a privilege to rise tonight to address the very serious situation of the current state of affairs in Haiti.

Let me begin by saying that the thoughts and prayers of all Canadians are with the brave people of that embattled country. We wish for them the same peace, security and stability that we have always enjoyed here at home. To that end, we have dispatched our most courageous citizens to safeguard them in their hour of need.

At the first of this week, I had the honour and the privilege to speak at Camp Gagetown. While I was at Camp Gagetown I also had the honour to see some of our men who were getting ready to go to Haiti. I want people to know that our men from Petawawa were also in Camp Gagetown, for we did not have enough there to send to Haiti.

When I was mayor of Saint John, New Brunswick, the president of Dominica came to my council meeting one night. She asked if I would come to Dominica to see if I could set up a local democratic type of government. I was honoured to have been asked that privilege. When I hear what is happening in Haiti, it was like Dominica.

I was flown into Dominica along with my city manager. We met with the mayor at that time. Young people were not educated, like Haiti. There were people with guns on the streets. We were told to stay in the hotel and not to go down the street, not even a block.

I was really dismayed to see the way it was in Dominica. Before we were through—and it took a couple of weeks to work with the local government and some of the churches—we were able to get the

children into schools. I was very, very pleased. Today, Dominica is doing quite well, it really and truly is. I am really honoured that I had a role to play.

On television in the past couple of weeks, Secretary-General Kofi Annan was being interviewed about Canada. He was asked if Canada should put more men and money into the military. He smiled and said yes.

I also had the opportunity to go to St. Petersburg, Russia with the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Lord Robertson spoke to us via a large screen. There were approximately 54 countries represented there. He said he wanted to speak to all of us who were representing Canada. He said that at one time we were in the top three of the scale with our military and the funding and now we are at the bottom end of the scale. He told us to go back to Canada and tell our Prime Minister and our government to make the military number one. Those were the words of Lord Robertson.

It was with an open mind and a heavy heart that I listened to the remarks of the United Nations Secretary-General in this chamber this week. He called on Canada to aim higher, to play a larger role on an ever expanding international stage, because he can see what is happening in Haiti. He sees it in other countries as well. He pointed to our rich history of peacekeeping and nation building as proof of the constructive role we can and must play. He asked us to do more because the fate of the world lies in the balance.

The Secretary-General's call did not fall on deaf ears. We in the House know that Canada is never neutral in the conflict between good and evil. We do not turn our backs on injustice. We do not accept the loss of innocent lives. We do not stand idle when people are suffering. It is simply not Canadian.

•(1900)

Canada has always enjoyed a special place in the UN, one that we have earned through generations of tireless effort and great sacrifice. From its very founding, the UN has relied on Canada to represent the best of humanity in the worst of times. That is why Lord Robertson told us to put more money into our military and get ourselves back up into the top three.

In a recent column in the *National Post*, General Lew MacKenzie argued that the Haiti mission is the very type of mission that Canadians will be asked to undertake in the post-Cold War world. He notes that the massive wars of the 20th century are now thankfully a thing of the past and that the future of conflict will be smaller, more contained warfare, often among the peoples of a specific region or divided nations.

I would bow to the general's expertise and support his findings wholeheartedly, but the reality is that any debate about what Canada should do is necessarily a debate about what Canada can do. For the past decade, I have repeatedly stood in the House to call for better funding for the military.

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In the year 1993-94, our defence budget was \$12 billion, but four years later that total was down to \$9.4 billion, a reduction of 22%, this despite the fact that in the same period our operational tempo of our armed forces, that is to say, that ratio of time spent by our military in deployed missions, rose from 6% to 23%, an increase of almost 400%. We know the effect that has on the families when the dads or the moms have to leave for six months and the children are at home. It has a very negative impact.

In short, for close to 10 years we have asked our military men and women to do significantly more with dramatically less. For the past few years, the government has prepared itself for a foreign policy and defence review, yet one has not really been undertaken.

As the former vice-chair of the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs and the defence critic for the PC Party, I was repeatedly asked to prepare submissions for those reviews. Because of leadership changes and new ministerial appointments, those reviews have never been completed.

Without a comprehensive defence policy, it is impossible for us to prepare our military for the vital role that it will play in foreign policy. Without a comprehensive foreign policy, our military will not have the necessary framework in which to make equipment purchases and develop personnel training.

Canada is simply not in a position to make haphazard commitments to every crisis that emerges. Our soldiers and their families are mentally and physically exhausted. They have been asked to commit themselves to a variety of missions, each more complicated and demanding than the last. They are asked to accept the most dangerous assignments on the planet with equipment that is unreliable or unavailable. They are, in short, asked to do the impossible.

I believe that a joint foreign policy and defence policy review is a vital priority for the government. A comprehensive review is an essential first step toward preparing our military for the 21st century, but it is not the only step or even the largest.

I have already spoken of the need to increase the defence budget. I would add as a third priority the need to increase the size of our military. The burdens of our benevolence have been placed on the shoulders of fewer and fewer soldiers. Consequently, these brave Canadians are being asked to accept more missions on a more frequent basis. They are separated, as I have stated, from their families much longer than they should be. They can be asked to return to the same theatre of operations—or indeed another—within a matter of months after they come home.

The manpower shortages facing our military are just as serious as the equipment shortages and are just as damaging as the budget shortfall. We must commit, each and every one of us on both sides of the House, to a recruitment initiative designed to bring in thousands of new recruits or we risk losing thousands of those in uniform today.

The men and women of the Canadian armed forces swear a duty to us and we all owe a duty to them. We owe them a duty to provide the best equipment possible. We owe them a duty to ensure that they are adequately trained for the missions we undertake in their names. We owe them a duty to ensure that we do not commit their lives to

fruitless endeavours where the risks far outweigh any potential benefits.

● (1905)

Our current practice is to wait until a crisis erupts before planning our response. It is ineffective, at best, and irresponsible, at worst.

Even in a rapidly changing world, where new threats to peace and security are emerging, we can predict many of the challenges we will face in the coming years. Now is the time to prepare our military for those challenges. Now is the time to purchase the equipment we will need, to recruit the soldiers we will need, and to forge the alliances we will need for the conflicts of this century.

We have a role to play in the world, one that has clearly defined our history and our values. The mission we undertake in Haiti is not unlike the missions we have undertaken in so many regions of the world. Yet it seems we are forced to scramble to find the people and equipment needed for these missions. We always seem to be moving men and women, and machines around like pieces on a chessboard.

It does not need to be this way. I have outlined here tonight a series of measures that I believe are essential for our future: a comprehensive defence policy; a larger defence budget; a targeted recruitment initiative; and strategic equipment purchases. If we commit ourselves to those actions today, we will be ready for the challenges of tomorrow.

In closing, I would like to extend my heartfelt best wishes to the men and women of the Canadian armed forces serving in Haiti and all across the globe. We pray for their success and their safe return home.

Hon. David Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would like to associate myself immediately with the comments that have just been made by the member for Saint John to wish the members of our armed forces every success and safety in Haiti.

In fact, the Haitians have a good deal to be proud of. It is the first republic in the world led by persons of African origin, and the first Caribbean nation to achieve independence in 1804. Unfortunately, the people of Haiti have endured long stretches of a dictatorial rule, interspersed with glimpses of democratic hope, like the presidential elections of 1990.

Recent events in Haiti, as everyone knows, have only served to emphasize that there is still a precarious and politically volatile situation.

● (1910)

[*Translation*]

I had the opportunity to visit Haiti in the early 1990s, to discuss the role of parliamentary committees with the newly elected representatives. The Haitians greeted me with open arms and they were warm and hospitable. What struck me the most was the dark legacy of violence and political unrest. Of the 42 heads of state in the country's history, 29 were assassinated or ousted. The culture of corruption is rampant. The country's history has often been marked with dictatorships, carnage and unsuccessful attempts to establish peace.

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[English]

As Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated in this chamber so eloquently yesterday:

The experience of Haiti shows how poverty, instability and violence feed on each other with repercussions for the broader region.

He urged the international community to help Haitians restore peace and harmony, while making a long term commitment to the region.

Too often, we in the international community make half-hearted attempts to right wrongs. We owe it to ourselves, as Canadians and as citizens of the western hemisphere, to ensure that the entire region enjoys long term political stability.

[Translation]

For there to be democracy, there must be stability and the appropriate infrastructure. It must be based on a culture that is capable of sustaining it. We must not imagine, as we did with the reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan, that sending troops for 90 days will be sufficient to restore democracy in Haiti.

What we need is an international commitment to improve the situation and we must help the Haitian people to build schools, set up police forces, establish a court system, get a legislative assembly up and running, and put in place a transparent bureaucracy.

There is a terrible impasse in a regime where the poor are punished just because they exist. Many countries decided to withdraw their aid after the frankly suspicious re-election of Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2000. They suspected, perhaps for good reason, that more than 70% of the funding had been used for illegal purposes or pocketed by corrupt officials. The bottom line, however, is that the ones hardest hit by these decisions to withdraw were the 80% of Haitians living below the poverty line.

[English]

Haitians need help in tackling their basic health problems, including dramatic rates of infection of HIV-AIDS and tuberculosis, their pervasive societal inequities, and their lack of even the most basic of infrastructures.

Democracy is a wonderful thing. Its self-determination can lift even the most oppressed people out of misery, but it is difficult to participate when one has little to live for and cannot provide for one's own basic needs.

Mere elections will not be enough to fix the problems in Haiti. A sustained commitment is necessary, one that will build the peace and security that are necessary to achieve rule of law. Rule of law perhaps should be Canada's foremost export.

Before the March break, I asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs about the role Canada could play in a possible humanitarian intervention in Haiti.

Canadians have much to learn from the experiences of General Roméo Dallaire in Rwanda. We must intervene when necessary and we must do so expeditiously and multilaterally.

This is why I am delighted to hear that 450 Canadian troops are set to join U.S. forces in Haiti this week, but much remains to be

done. Reports out of Haiti yesterday indicate that the presence of foreign troops had not done much to quell the violence.

There is a complete lack of infrastructure and Police Chief Leon Charles admitted recently that he has approximately 3,500 police officers to cover a country of eight million.

The exiled Jean-Bertrand Aristide recently urged his supporters to mount a "peaceful resistance to restore constitutional order". One must sincerely hope that Aristide's people will not interpret this message as an incitement to further violence, but it is difficult to be sure of that.

Furthermore, the opposition parties in Haiti are not linked to the rebel fighters and have little control over their actions. Haiti is currently a failed state, tragically, where anarchy and chaos reign, and the rule of law is non-existent.

Yesterday our Minister for International Cooperation announced \$5 million in aid to address the situation in Haiti. That is in addition to the \$1.9 million already provided to the Red Cross, and the \$5 million provided to the Organization of American States.

Canada has given Haiti upwards of \$600 million in the last 40 years. The money has been there, but perhaps the commitment has not followed. Obviously, simply throwing money at the problem is not the solution.

We need to live up to our international agreements and the promises we have made. In 2001, at the Quebec City summit, Canada along with other nations pledged to do our best to support constitutional rule across the Americas. Haitians deserve our best efforts to keep that promise.

This year marks Haiti's 200th anniversary of independence. What better way to celebrate than to build a better country for all of its citizens? What a present Canada could give by providing genuine long term commitment to resolving the situation.

●(1915)

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Chair, I have a question for the hon. member from Edmonton.

He will no doubt recall that in late January 2003, the former secretary of state for Latin America and Africa hosted a summit here in Ottawa of la Francophonie. This summit included France, representatives of the European Union, and the United States. The purpose of this summit was to consider the Haitian crisis, as it was termed. Haiti was not invited by Canada to this summit.

It was an in camera summit. After the summit, there was some confidential information that was leaked to *L'Actualité*. It was indicated that consideration was being given to a kind of Kosovo-style United Nations trusteeship of Haiti.

Is the hon. member aware of this conference? Will he indicate to the House whether at that conference, which Canada hosted, the issue of regime change, in other words, the issue of the removal of President Aristide in Haiti, was discussed one year before it actually took place?

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Hon. David Kilgour: Mr. Chair, my hon. colleague will know that I was no longer the secretary of state for Latin America at the time. I did not attend the conference. I read the same article that my friend is referring to.

I cannot say whether or not what he is alleging was true or not because I was not there. The position of secretary of state for Latin America and Africa no longer exists. I cannot answer his question. As he will appreciate, I will not try to answer a question to which I do not know the answer.

Mr. Svend Robinson: Mr. Chair, I appreciate that the member was not secretary of state at that time. Nevertheless, in view of the fact that the position no longer exists and he was, I believe, the predecessor in that position, I thought he may have been involved in the conference, but he has indicated that it was not the case.

I want to ask the hon. member about the serious questions that have arisen concerning the circumstances of the removal of President Aristide from Haiti, and the suggestions and serious concern that this may have amounted to a coup d'état. That would make it probably the 33rd coup d'état in Haiti.

In light of the serious questions that have arisen and the statements by President Aristide himself that he was in effect kidnapped and forcibly removed by the United States, would the hon. member agree that it is essential to respond positively to the urgings of CARICOM that there be an independent inquiry into the circumstances of the removal of President Aristide from Haiti?

• (1920)

Hon. David Kilgour: Mr. Chair, the member is raising a very important point. CARICOM is the body which speaks for the Caribbean nations. He asked about an independent inquiry to determine whether or not Mr. Aristide was removed or left voluntarily. We can only gain by having such a process and can lose nothing. I am in agreement with my friend's point.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Chair, I am very pleased to take part in this evening's take-note debate on the situation in Haiti.

I will begin by saying that I am somewhat distressed to see the situation in which these people have been living for decades and decades. There was one dictator after another. There was so much hope placed on President Aristide when he took power and gave free rein to democracy at last. The turn of events leaves us with something of a bitter taste in our mouths.

I have nothing but good words for the Haitian people who, in my opinion, have often been persecuted and victimized by all these coups d'état, not to mention the associated tragedies.

I must say a few words about a woman who came to see me. Her name is Cassandra Duvert. Some years ago, she came to Canada with her partner, one of Aristide's lawyers. She brought one of her two children with her; one stayed in Haiti while the other came to Canada with his parents. The lawyer returned to Haiti with the child and left this woman here alone. From that time on, she practically lost track of her children. There was no question, naturally, of giving the woman legal custody. One day, unexpectedly, her husband telephoned her, following the regime change, to tell her she needed

to take the children back because there had just been an attempt on his life. The children were with him in the car at the time, which made him fear for their safety.

We can imagine all the tragedies being stirred up by this regime change. In fact, I am in discussions with the Minister of Foreign Affairs to try to get these children out of the situation they are in.

This brings us back to the question of whether or not Aristide's departure was a coup d'état. It could be discussed at great length. I am not opposed to having an international panel look into the matter.

However, if we really want to give democracy in Haiti a chance, we must also focus on the fact that there are so many illegal weapons in that country, many in the hands of the factions, that it is no longer democracy being expressed, just the power of weapons. In that respect, much work remains to be done.

My colleague from Mercier and I were somewhat critical of the government for being slow to react. I believe that we could have acted sooner. I am not even sure if the troops are already in the field, since apparently there was a slight delay in operations. In our opinion, it took time before Canada said it would be sending 450 soldiers.

I also know that this is putting stress on the rotation of Canadian troops. I cannot deny this, and I am even one of the first to acknowledge it. However, given the urgency of this situation, given that there could be a bloodbath, it seems to me that the international community, and Canada above all, has a responsibility to intervene and restore some security to a country is torn as this.

I do, however, want to praise the work of the Canadian Forces that will be in the field probably in a matter of hours. Soldiers from the RCR in Gagetown are there. I had the pleasure of meeting them in Eritrea, when I visited the Canadian camps. This Canadian Forces presence was authorized under a UN chapter VII resolution for peacekeeping. As we know, there was no man's land between Eritrea and Ethiopia. I had the opportunity to meet soldiers from the RCR there.

There is also the Canadian Forces Joint Operations Group, which is currently in Haiti, as well as 430 Squadron from Valcartier, a group of helicopter pilots I had the pleasure of meeting when I trained in Valcartier. I must say that I was very impressed by their manoeuvres. I have no doubt that they will be able to accomplish a great deal in Haiti, particularly in terms of providing humanitarian assistance.

So, there is indeed a stress. We still have troops in Bosnia and in Afghanistan. As we were told earlier, there are some 3,700 Canadian troops taking part in missions such as this one around the world. Right now, it would be difficult to add another 450. It should also be understood that the current mission is a peacemaking mission, which is much more difficult than a peacekeeping mission. The social climate is very unstable. Many weapons are circulating and tragedies can occur. These people are not holidaying, they are not tourists out there. They are needed to provide a degree of security that currently does not exist.

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•(1925)

Earlier, the Minister of Foreign Affairs told us that he wants to implement chapter VII, the peacekeeping process, in three months. This process is in fact much less difficult.

I was able to provide some testimony in this regard, because I visited the Canadian camps in Bosnia, during rotation 9. That was truly a peacekeeping mission. The danger is not nearly as great for troops engaged in peacekeeping missions. However, they still have to travel, to go abroad and to spend time there. We know that this is very difficult, because there is currently a large number of missions.

I want to get back to the issue of disarmament. We should emphasize this aspect. Just today, the *New York Times*—and that was the subject of one of the questions that I put to the minister earlier—mentioned that the Americans are now saying that the disarmament process should begin.

If we really want to give democracy a chance, to let public and private institutions regain strength and to truly try to create the most normal context possible, we will have to ensure that the power of arms does not exist anymore.

I will tell you exactly what Col. Charles Gurganus said today in connection with the U.S Marines. He described the action as “active and reactive disarmament”. So the Americans are aware of that.

I am therefore asking the minister this evening whether, from now on, if the troops are not yet there, as soon as they arrive, they will join with the Americans in disarming these factions, because these are still in place and still active.

There are, for instance, the *chimères*, who support the departed Aristide. They are still spreading terror in Port-au-Prince with their armed incursions. Looting, rapes and murders are still far from uncommon, and weapons are always involved. It is therefore important to confiscate these weapons.

The problem with Aristide is that, in 1994, he demobilized the army completely. He sent the soldiers home but he did not tell them “leave your weapons behind, and go back home”, so away they went with their guns. As a result, there are plenty of weapons in circulation. Then there is the fact that they are so close to the Dominican Republic, with its rather porous border, and guns can easily get across. There is no one patrolling the border. So there are gun traffickers within Haiti, and as a result the opposing factions have armed confrontations.

There are not just the *chimères*. There are also the dissident *chimères*, who make up the infamous cannibal army of Gonaïves. They too are armed and have their own interests, their own line of action, which always involves weapons.

Then there is the famous Guy Philippe, the self-proclaimed army and paramilitary leader, you will recall, but that did not last more than two or three days. His followers are habitual criminals and all are armed.

These factions must be disarmed. I implore the Minister of National Defence to give the order immediately. I have not seen the rules of engagement. I have not seen the exact mission, except for the fact that it comes under chapter 6 of the UN charter, which is a

rather elaborate resolution. Even if it is not specific, we feel there are enough provisions in the current resolution to allow for disarmament. We must take this direction with the U.S.

I hope we achieve disarmament. I hope that the people of Haiti find real democracy again. For years now, Haitians have been denied real democracy, an active federal public service and an active public sector. For years, now, private enterprise has been sidelined. No one wants to invest money when there is such insecurity.

For the situation to return to normal, to give Haiti's democracy and economy a chance, these factions have to be disarmed. The U.S. has understood. Now I would like the Minister of National Defence to understand as well and to give orders accordingly so that this democracy can be restored.

•(1930)

[*English*]

Hon. Scott Brison (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Canada-U.S.), Lib.): Mr. Chair, as already noted by my hon. colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the current political situation in Haiti, punctuated by events of the last few weeks, has its roots in the seriously flawed legislative and municipal elections of May 2000. The resulting polarization of the government in opposition, compounded with weak institutions and severe economic and social challenges in the country, have led us to the situation today where strong participation by the international community is required to accompany Haiti in changing direction and moving forward to a more positive future.

Canada has been intimately involved in Haiti for many years, perhaps most profoundly since 1994 when we began supporting training and development of the newly constituted Haitian national police. Since that time, the bulk of Canada's \$45 million in development assistance to Haiti has gone to support the security sector, in particular Canadian policing contributions and police related activities.

Our engagement in Haiti has been one of our largest international missions, with a total of 685 officers deployed at different times from October 1993 through to the end of March 2001. Canadian personnel participated in the various UN policing missions in Haiti as members of the police civile and providing training at the police academy. Canada also bilaterally provided institutional support for the Haitian national police.

Despite our ongoing commitment to Haiti, Canada decided to terminate our police engagement in that country in March 2001, due to the worsening political insecurity context more broadly, and more directly as a result of the politicization, corruption and lack of administrative and management capacity and experience within the Haitian national police. Nevertheless, our efforts internationally to work toward a better future for Haiti has continued.

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Along with ongoing Canadian development assistance to Haiti, we have also become the largest contributor to the OAS special mission in Haiti, led by Canadian David Lee, which has been on the ground for the last two years. It has acquired experience and developed expertise in supporting a process of democratic strengthening in Haiti.

With the events of the past month, we are now facing a new era for Haiti and the opportunity for a new beginning. The challenges are great and this time we must be sure not to underestimate the commitment required to overcome them. Canada has been there before and will be there for Haiti in the future.

Canada believes it is crucial that the efforts of the international community in Haiti be coordinated effectively. We can play a strong advocacy role in ensuring that the efforts of all agencies, particularly the United Nations and the OAS, are complementary and well coordinated.

The OAS special mission can play an important role in reducing the level of tension in Haiti, working toward building a social consensus and supporting good governance efforts. Its contribution is valuable and is to be encouraged as we look forward to building a viable democracy. Canada can play a leadership role in increasing the capacity of the mission to facilitate consensus building, monitor human rights, reinforce the justice system and improve policing. This is why Canada has recently pledged a further \$5 million to the OAS special mission in addition to our previous support.

All the international communities, including Canada, stand ready to provide support. It is ultimately up to the people of Haiti to find the way forward. The earlier work of CARICOM and the OAS serve as the foundations for the current efforts to rebuild Haitian institutions that will provide a better future for Haiti. The process of political reform is already underway, following those steps outlined in the transition plan originally proposed by CARICOM that remain relevant. For this to be a success, there must be a firm commitment for reform on the part of the new interim government.

The first step of this of course, following the resignation of former President Aristide, was the swearing in of the new president in accordance with the Haitian constitution. While the constitution clearly states that the head of the supreme court is the next in line, it is silent on how this appointment should be confirmed without a sitting national assembly. However, this issue is being addressed through the newly formed tripartite council, composed of one representative each from the government, the opposition and the international community. The council has now named a seven member Conseil de sages which will be working at naming a new prime minister who will in turn nominate a national unity cabinet.

● (1935)

Accompanied by the international community, a provisional electoral council will be looking to organize elections, hopefully before the end of 2004, in order to ensure a smooth and timely return to true democracy.

The task ahead is enormous. In order for the political process to move forward, the international community is committed in the immediate term to provide security and work with the Haitian national police to restore order. The UN multinational interim force,

or MIF, including Canadian participation, is assisting in bringing stability and security to Haiti.

Over the medium term, a continued military presence coupled with ongoing humanitarian assistance and a civilian mission to help rebuild Haiti's democratic institutions most particularly its civilian police will be critical to help Haiti move forward.

Planning is currently underway for this UN stabilization force which would take over from the MIF in three months' time. The role and mandate of this stabilization force are still to be determined and must be approved by the Security Council, but it will play a critical role in restoring essential governance and security institutions, the rule of law, and set the stage for long term development programming.

There is now an opportunity for Haiti to fully embrace democracy. Addressing the key issue of impunity is essential for the re-establishment of rule of law in democracy. Our shared goals need to ensure a brighter future for all Haitians, a future in which they can rebuild their lives and follow their dreams in a secure environment.

Governance is key, and building strong institutions and a democratic culture cannot be done overnight. What really is required in Haiti is long term institution building from the judiciary, to the police, to parliament to the education, health and agricultural systems. We have already learned hard lessons about the effectiveness of our assistance if the governance framework is flawed for instance. As our Prime Minister has said on several occasions, we will not make that mistake again.

We must evaluate the situation rationally, identify needs and priorities, and respond to the needs of the Haitian people. We must also be realistic in our expectations. Haiti is a long term project and will require long term international donor support.

It is important to note that an important byproduct of this current crisis in Haiti is the close collaboration that has developed between Canada and the United States. Equally important is that our partnership with the United States is being pursued under the auspices of the OAS and the UN.

We have worked closely within these multilateral institutions, with the U.S. and our CARICOM partners, to work toward solutions to the political crisis in Haiti. Canada will do its part in building a new and better future for all Haitians. I believe that Canadians will be increasingly proud of the important role that Canada is playing in building a better world and defending not only Canadian interests, but also the Canadian values of equality, democracy, and rule of law.

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Chair, the hon. member for Kings—Hants has spoken of the close collaboration between Canada and the United States on Haiti. Given the fact that what appears to have occurred in Haiti is an American driven, an American led coup d'état, the 33rd coup d'état in Haiti's history, aided, abetted and actively encouraged by France, I think many Canadians are deeply concerned and troubled by the extent to which Canada was in fact collaborating with the United States as the hon. member has indicated.

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I want to ask the member a specific question. The member referred to the importance of working closely with CARICOM and our partners in CARICOM. The member will know that a proposal was put together by the OAS and by CARICOM that involved power sharing. That proposal was put together in the days before the overthrow of President Aristide.

President Aristide accepted that proposal. It was rejected by the murderous thugs and the rebels who were determined to overthrow him, even though he had been democratically elected with the support of some 90% of the Haitian people in 2000. They rejected it.

Yet Canada stood by and did nothing whatsoever to support the democratically elected President Aristide and the people of Haiti at that very critical time. The Americans abandoned him and hung him out to dry. They made it clear that they were prepared to see him overthrown. The French, in their desire to please the Americans after taking a distinct position on the war in Iraq, urged the overthrow of President Aristide as well.

Now our partners in CARICOM are asking for an independent international inquiry into the circumstances that led to the illegal removal of President Aristide as the president of Haiti.

I earlier asked the hon. member's colleague, the member from Edmonton, whether he supported that call by CARICOM for an international inquiry into all of the circumstances of the removal of President Aristide. He said yes, he did agree with that.

I put the same question now to the parliamentary secretary with special responsibility for relations between Canada and the United States. Does the parliamentary secretary agree with his colleague and with many Canadians that there must be an independent international inquiry to determine the circumstances that led to the overthrow of President Aristide?

• (1940)

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Chair, first, our understanding is Mr. Aristide voluntarily resigned. Part of his decision making would have been from the collapse of his own security which was not a situation to which Canada contributed. It is not a situation that we were directly involved in. It is my understanding that in fact his own security forces had weakened to the extent that he was willing to resign voluntarily and that it was certainly not a coup d'état engineered by the U.S. or anyone else.

In terms of the 2000 election results, as the hon. member knows, the results may have been overwhelming, but there were significant questions around the legitimacy of the elections from that time. Part of the issue we have been facing ever since has been based on some of the questions around those elections.

I thought it was curious that the hon. member referred to France as acting to mollify the Americans. It would be one of the first times that France has been in a hurry to mollify the Americans in terms of foreign policy. I would be greatly surprised if in fact France acted in a way in Haiti, a country with which we share an interest as another member of the Francophonie, to mollify the Americans. That would not make a lot of sense based on what I understand to be the traditional foreign policy of France.

The real focus here is not in the short term necessarily focusing on how we arrived in the last several days and weeks in our current situation, but in focusing on the democratization, stabilization and reconstruction of Haiti. The people of Haiti deserve that. If we are to have a foreign policy as a country based on Canadian values, those values being democracy, rule of law and equality, it is in our interests to be working toward that.

There is a lot of work that has to be done. By working with the OAS and CARICOM and others multilaterally, we can achieve a great deal. The real focus in the coming days, weeks, months and in fact years needs to be on that very positive, forward thinking focused effort to provide a more stable, peaceful and democratic Haiti.

• (1945)

Mr. Svend Robinson: Mr. Chair, I noted the hon. member's suggestion that President Aristide, in his words, voluntarily resigned. In fact President Aristide himself has made it very clear that far from resigning voluntarily, he was driven from office by both France and the United States. In fact his American lawyer, Brian Concannon, said today after meeting with Aristide in exile in the Central African Republic:

The ambassadors of France and the United States told him that he would be killed, his family would be killed and his supporters would be killed if he did not leave right away.

That is not a voluntary departure. That is a coup d'état.

I want to again ask my hon. friend to answer the question that I put to him initially. Does he or does he not support the call by CARICOM for an independent international inquiry into the circumstances that led to the overthrow of President Aristide?

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Chair, first of all, I can tell the hon. member that I disagree and find almost ludicrous the allegation that the governments of France and the United States told President Aristide that if he were not to voluntarily resign, he and his family would be killed. I do not believe that was the case. Although that may be what he is saying, I do not believe that the governments of France and the United States would be involved in that type of thuggery.

My understanding is that Mr. Aristide had difficulties in terms of his own security forces that effectively melted around him and he did not have the ability to protect himself against his own people. When a democracy fails or there is a crumbling democracy as in the situation that has evolved in Haiti, to maintain power he actually required physical security that simply was not there. That is what I understand to be a contributing factor to his reasoning that he and his family may not have been safe, but that was not instigated by either the United States or France.

As such, I would reject the premise of the member's question that President Aristide was threatened by France and the U.S. and forced to resign based on those threats because I do not believe those threats occurred.

Mr. Svend Robinson: Mr. Chair, the question that was asked was does he or does not support an independent international inquiry into the circumstances that forced President Aristide to leave Haiti?

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Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Chair, I appreciate the hon. member's persistence on this point, but I think he ought to be, as every member of the House ought to be, focused on democratizing, stabilizing, rebuilding the lives of Haitians and moving forward. We have to put every ounce of our effort and resources behind that as a country and as part of our multilateral efforts.

I really do not believe it is constructive or helpful for us to be focusing any of those efforts on investigative work when in fact there are people dying or whose lives are torn apart. We can be part of the solution as opposed to navel gazing and trying to find sources of problems in the last several weeks. In fact, we can be part of a brighter future, a more democratic and stable future for the people of Haiti.

I know the hon. member shares those Canadian values of democracy, rule of law and equality. Since he shares those values and treasures them as a Canadian, he ought to, as a Canadian legislator, be working to help the people of Haiti such that they can take for granted in many ways as we do those fundamental values. I would ask that he support the efforts, which I know he would, of the Canadian government to try to work with other countries who share those values, to help the people of Haiti achieve that stability and democracy.

• (1950)

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Chair, it is a privilege to speak on this subject.

I want to talk about three things. They will be a little different from what other people have talked about.

First, I want to talk a little about take note debates; second, I would like to talk about my experience with Haiti; and third, I would like to talk about the adopted children who are in Haiti. There are a great many people in central Alberta, and in Alberta generally, who I have been dealing with to try and help expedite the adopted children leaving Haiti. I think these are three areas that are worthy of a few minutes, rather than talking about the military and some of the other issues.

I arrived here some 11 years ago. Shortly after my arrival as the foreign affairs critic, we had a take note debate. The take note debate was similar in attendance to what we have here tonight. It was rather shocking for me because I thought that I came here to present a point of view, to debate an issue, and to talk about what I thought my constituents wanted. I thought that people would be listening, and people would respond and react to the kinds of things that they would hear in this House.

Instead, what I found with take note debates was that they are exactly that. We talk to ourselves, and possibly to the T.V. cameras, and maybe someone out there is listening to our point of view about a certain subject. I find it very frustrating and a poor way to do it.

At that time, I developed a concept. Why do we not have a real take note debate, where we spend the first third part of the debate bringing in experts to tell parliamentarians what the details are of the issue? Then we spend the next third of the debate with the critics from each party, maybe two from each party, presenting their point of view of the particular subject. Then the third part would be an actual free vote where we would vote about things that really

mattered as they pertained to that subject. That seemed to me like a real way to do it democratically and to make these take note debates meaningful.

Instead, we come sincerely, on all sides of the House, to present our points of view, but I really question how much of that is heard or really valued.

I again put that forward as a concept and hopefully our new Prime Minister will look at the democratic deficit and review take note debates so that they actually become meaningful.

The second subject is about Haiti itself. As the foreign affairs critic, I travelled with Mr. Axworthy, then foreign affairs minister, to Haiti during the last revolt and got a chance to visit pretty well the entire country. I was pretty shocked by what I saw. I was shocked by the poverty. I was shocked by the lack of clean water, health care, and the very basic needs that human beings should have.

I went on patrol with our troops. I will probably never forget the dedication of those police and military who were there—great young men and women—but I was shocked by what we saw. We walked down a lane and all of a sudden we knew people were watching us, something was watching us. Of course, the military took some pleasure out of shining their lights and seeing a bunch of rats standing on their hind legs, literally ready to come after us. It certainly impressed upon me the situation in that poor country. It also made me think that we must do something better.

We met with some parliamentarians. One of their major concerns was what kind of new parliament building they could build. And yet, on the streets at night were the kinds of things that we saw.

I look at that country, as well, coming from a tourist industry background, and I say it has everything. It has been deforested and so on. But it really has the beaches, the climate, and the weather. It has great potential. And of course, there is the politics, the history of the lack of law and order, and the destruction that has occurred in that sad country.

• (1955)

At that time I was very impressed with the fact that Canada was involved in the training of police by police forces from across the country. We had a school for judges where we tried to teach the rule of law. We had teachers and professors who were trying to show them how to develop an education system. And we had the health people who were trying to establish some semblance of a normal health care system.

I have to wonder what happened because we are back to almost square one or even worse with the kinds of events that we have seen on television.

When we talk about Haiti and places like that, we cannot just say we are going to send some troops and they will be there for three months. We need to talk about how we could rebuild a country like that so that it would be sustainable, so we do not have to go back again and start from square one.

That becomes an issue for Canadian parliamentarians. We are naturals in terms of helping Haiti. The language there is French and that gives us a step up in that area.

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The third issue deals with the orphans who have been adopted by many Canadian parents. I am aware of 28 such parents and many of them I am sure are watching this debate tonight.

The people in foreign affairs and immigration have been fantastic to work with. They have phoned me at 7:00 a.m. They have phoned me on a Sunday night. They have communicated with me above and beyond the call of duty. I certainly appreciate that and I commend them in the House and trust that hopefully they might read *Hansard* to hear that they were commended. I will not mention names but there are two outstanding people who will know who they are that work in Citizenship and Immigration Canada who have helped and kept us informed.

My job has been to inform these parents. I have letters from typical parents, and again I will not use their names without permission, from my constituency of Red Deer. They have been involved in the adoption of a baby in Haiti and they have an adoption number. Everything has been done except a release by the Haitian government. Some have been waiting months and some have been waiting longer to have that piece of paper signed.

I totally understand why the Canadian government cannot go in and take those children out of the orphanage and take them out of the country. However, I would implore the government to do everything in its power to get those papers signed to release those children and get them out to safety so that these parents could pick them up.

That is an issue that I am not sure anyone else has talked about, but it is a very important issue. Many of these adoptive parents are in Quebec. I am aware of 28 of them and there are seven in my riding who I have been working with on this issue.

Our troops are going there to stabilize a difficult situation. I would urge them, and I know this will be high on their priority list, to help these parents to get these very young babies out of the country so that they can come to Canada and have a new life.

• (2000)

In conclusion, I thank the government for that part of it. I am glad we are going there, but let us look at the long term of what we can do.

Then, let us take a look at take note debates because my opinion is the same as the Prime Minister's. I believe that members of Parliament do have a right to make their voices heard. Parliament should be the centre of national debate on policy. I would like to see that happen here so that we could actually vote on sending our troops places and express these kind of concerns that exist across the country.

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Chair, I have a question for the hon. member which is similar to the one I put to the member for Kings—Hants.

Given the grave concerns that have been raised about the circumstances which led to the removal of President Aristide from Haiti, does the hon. member agree with the call by Caricom, including the chair of CARICOM, Prime Minister P.J. Patterson of Jamaica, for an international independent inquiry into the circumstances that led to the removal of President Aristide?

Mr. Bob Mills: Mr. Chair, I have a little trouble answering that question. I am not the foreign affairs critic now; I am the environment critic. I cannot put forward my party's position, but I will put forward my position as the member of Parliament for Red Deer.

Having been to Haiti under difficult circumstances, I was not very impressed with Mr. Aristide and his administration. I do not feel that Papa Doc did a very good job. I do not think Baby Doc did a much better job. I think that poor country has been subject to dictators and has been very lacking in democracy.

I do not dislike the French and the Americans for trying to bring stability in the best way possible. It seemed to me, again looking from the outside, that the only way to stabilize that country was in fact to remove Mr. Aristide.

I think that his removal was for his own benefit and that of his family. I do not believe he would have survived staying there.

Whether it was done, as the member might put it, by force or whether it was done voluntarily, I would trust the authorities who did it. It was in the best interests of the people of Haiti. It has been stabilized now and there is increasing stability. I do not really see that an inquiry, another attack on France or the Americans, would accomplish anything for those children or the people of Haiti.

Let us stabilize the place. Let us get it back and teach the people democracy, law and order and help their judicial system. That will do a heck of a lot more than wasting our money on an inquiry into something where there could be many points of view and could be seen as simply an attack on the United States of America.

Mr. Svend Robinson: Mr. Chair, it is interesting to see that both the governing Liberal Party and the Conservative Party agree on getting at the truth through an independent international inquiry.

I found it extraordinary that the Conservative member of Parliament would now be saying that he agrees that it was absolutely essential that Aristide be overthrown in order to bring stability to Haiti. So much for democracy.

The fact of the matter is that President Aristide was elected with the support of well over 80% of the people of Haiti in 2000. When did the United States, France, and indeed Canada take unto themselves the power to decide which democratically elected leader should be overthrown? What are the criteria? Is the criterion respect for fundamental human rights? Is Canada then suggesting we should be overthrowing the repressive regimes in countries such as Colombia in this hemisphere, or Turkey?

What gives the United States the power to decide that President Aristide was expendable and should be removed from office? Is it in fact the member's position that it was entirely appropriate for France, the United States, and presumably Canada to ensure the overthrow of a democratically elected president of Haiti?

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• (2005)

Mr. Bob Mills: Mr. Chair, if we were to ask the Americans or the French I would bet the last place they want to be is Haiti. I think it was strictly a matter of the situation deteriorating. The UN identified it as a critical site as there was killing going on. We could examine the deterioration; from some of the people I have talked to, we could ask if it was in fact a true democracy in 2000. I do not think too many people would agree that it was a true democracy in the year 2004. It was an appeal by the international community.

The parents I represent and am talking about here were pleading for somebody to go there to stop the shooting and killing around the orphanages. There are gangs of thugs, some of them representing Mr. Aristide, shooting and killing people. For the most part, these parents were pretty happy to hear that U.S. marines were offshore and that they were landing and stabilizing the situation in a very democratic way. It is tough to be the policeman of the world; it is a tough position to be in. Many of the people I have talked to are very glad that the marines went there.

Of course, as I said, Canada has a unique position, particularly in the linguistic and historical areas and in the fact that we have many Haitians here, particularly in the Montreal area and in Calgary. They are asking us to please stabilize their homeland and get it to a place where they can go and visit their relatives and feel safe and secure. I do not see the bad guys as much as the hon. member does. I see it as a stabilizing and very welcome effort by the Americans, the French and now the Canadians.

Mr. Svend Robinson: Mr. Chair, we heard the same argument about stability, of course, when Pinochet overthrew the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende of Chile and we are hearing similar arguments with respect to Venezuela now, which is very dangerous.

I have a brief question for my hon. colleague. He has talked about the importance of assisting the poor, and particularly children, in Haiti. Yet since 2002 CARICOM has been pleading with the United States to stop its devastating economic embargo on Haiti. The United States was systematically blocking previously approved loans to Haiti and CARICOM foreign ministers were urging the United States to release those funds. To quote from their plea: "They stressed that the prompt release of such funds was critical if a catastrophe were to be avoided in that country".

Where was the hon. member? Where was his party in calling for the release of those desperately needed resources to assist the people of Haiti, resources which were being blocked by the United States, even though CARICOM, in the region, was urging that they be released? That contributed more to poverty and more to injustice, affecting children and others in Haiti, than anything else that has happened in that country for many, many years.

Mr. Bob Mills: Mr. Chair, this is sort of déjà vu, because I remember debating 10 years ago with the same member on the same issues. Basically he knows my position on embargos and knows that they do not work very well. Particularly in areas like that, they do not work at all. We just do not have enough ships and control to be able to prevent them.

An embargo on a place like Haiti is not the reason that there is a problem today. The problem today is the deterioration of the very

social fabric of the country and that is what I would hope we are dedicated to returning. I would hope that in this debate tonight, the Prime Minister—if he hears it—will hear that we want to return that social stability, the rule of law, safety for citizens, education, and all those factors that make it that way. We must also not forget to get those orphan kids to their Canadian parents as soon as possible.

To get into what should have been and what might have been, nobody is always right and wrong on these issues. I am sure the Americans made mistakes and I am sure that Aristide made mistakes, but I do not think we are here to solve that tonight.

• (2010)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, Lib.): Mr. Chair, you know that the political situation in Haiti has been in the media headlines for some weeks now. As Canadians and Quebeckers, we have all followed the story attentively. As a member of Parliament, I have taken an even greater interest.

The Government of Canada is very sensitive to issues affecting the other francophone country in the Americas and does not believe that we can isolate ourselves from what is happening within its borders. Like Canada, Haiti is a member of a number of international organizations including the Francophonie, the Organization of American States and the United Nations.

Moreover, there are many people of Haitian origin living in Canada, particularly in and around Montreal. The Canadian government wants to support them and has a very special interest in what happens in Haiti. Canada, as an active member of the international community, is aware of the fact that the continuing problems in that country pose great risks to its citizens. That is why we responded firmly to the pleas for intervention.

I believe that all members would agree that the Canadian government could not ignore the calls to help restore peace in Haiti. I am very proud of the Canadian government's initiatives on this. They are aimed at restoring calm and order in the capital, Port-au-Prince, and all over the country, through our participation in the United Nations Multinational Interim Force.

Canada's commitment goes beyond simple emergency measures, because we want to ensure that the conditions exist that would allow a true democratic culture to blossom in Haiti. Creating a real democracy is a long-term process and will require a sustained international presence.

The Canadian government's commitment is serious and responsible, since we want to ensure that the new regime is stable and that we will not witness a new series of coups d'état and autocratic regimes in Haiti. We are working with the international community and the local population to ensure that this sad page of Haitian political history is truly finished and that a new page, written in the language of democracy, will be started today.

Government Orders

On March 5, the Minister of National Defence announced that the Canadian Forces would deploy some 450 soldiers to Haiti. These soldiers will be active members of the United Nations Multinational Interim Force. The Canadian contingent will be supported in its mission by six helicopters.

The Canadian Forces are already involved in many areas throughout the world, including in Afghanistan, but the Chief of Defence Staff has indicated that the Canadian Forces can play a key role in Haiti without compromising their other commitments and obligations in Canada and abroad.

The mandate of the interim force is to restore safe living conditions in Haiti. They will have to restore order within the law enforcement agencies and the interim government. Guaranteeing public safety is the cornerstone of the constitutional process that would restore a democratic government in Haiti.

If the citizens of Haiti are in constant fear for their safety, they will not be able to help build a new political system. Each and every one of them needs to take part in the debates, because the principles of equality and universality lie at the very heart of democratic values.

Canadian troops will serve alongside their counterparts from various countries to ensure that fear, intimidation or uncertainty are not used to exclude anyone from the process.

Canada has also provided financial assistance to this Caribbean nation. On February 20, Canada announced that it was granting an additional \$5 million to the special mission of the Organization of the American States in Haiti. Just yesterday, the Minister for International Cooperation announced that Canada has pledged another \$5 million in support of the United Nations humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and transition efforts in Haiti. This money complements the \$1.95 million already announced for humanitarian assistance since the current crisis began.

● (2015)

Canada responded strongly to the call of the people of Haiti and the international community.

The mandate of the UN interim multinational force in Haiti is about three-month long. However, Canada realizes that this short period will not allow to establish a representative and functional democracy in that country shaken by several years of political, economic and social instability, which only intensified in the last weeks. A long-term commitment is required. Here again, Canada is taking its responsibilities.

The UN Secretariat was given a period of at least one month to define the options for the follow-on forces. These will be in place at the end of the three-month mandate undertaken by the interim force.

Canada will play a leadership role in this follow-on mission. We will not simply stay timidly in the background while others make decisions. We will be key players. Canada's ability to act in a crisis is recognized internationally, particularly through its participation in Afghanistan, the Balkans and Africa. We will bring our experience

and effectiveness to help the people of Haiti during these times of upheaval.

Since the beginning of the crisis, Canada has shown support for a political agreement that would come from a wide consensus among representatives of the Haitian government, opposition political parties and the civil society. Our action during the months to come will seek to create and maintain the conditions that are needed to articulate and implement such a consensus within the political and social structures of that country.

Canadians and Quebeckers will be there to allow the emergence of a stable democracy in Haiti. Our troops will not leave the country at the first opportunity, but will stay until the satisfactory completion of that mandate. The Prime Minister clearly said that Canada will play a major role in the follow-on mission.

Canada intends to take multilateral action in Haiti. We will work in conjunction with the United Nations, the Organization of American States and the Caribbean Community and Common Market, CARICOM, to help Haiti find lasting solutions to the recent crisis.

This spirit of cooperation we are witnessing in the international community in response to the dire need of one of our members is clear proof of our commitment to democratic values. Multilateralism works when each member's participation is recognized and considered valid. This message of inclusion is something we hope to develop within Haitian society and its political institutions.

Our country has long taken multilateral action in Haiti. In 1994, we actively participated in the international US-led force and, later, in the UN mission to Haiti. From 1993 to 2001, Canada sent police officers to help Haitians restore democracy, stability and the rule of law.

Our activities abroad, in Haiti and elsewhere, always aim to promote a reliable justice system, full recognition for human rights, economic development and the establishment of a civil society.

Yesterday, His Excellency Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, gave an important speech in the House of Commons. He reminded us that the international community will need to make a decisive contribution to buttress Haiti's democratic institutions. He said, "Only through a long term commitment to help the country can stability and prosperity be assured. Half-hearted efforts of the past have been insufficient. We cannot afford to fail this time". Through initiatives recently announced, Canada is answering this call.

Haiti is facing enormous challenges. It remains one of the poorest countries in the Americas.

Government Orders

● (2020)

The Canadian government recognized well before the current crisis that peace and democratic development could not be maintained without sustainable and equitable economic development in that country. To that end, in 2002-03, our official development assistance to Haiti totalled \$23.85 million. This is the largest assistance program provided to any country in the Americas. We have also contributed \$3.25 million to the Organization of American States Special Mission since its inception in March 2002; \$500,000 of this contribution has been given to the Agence intergouvernementale de la Francophonie.

I reiterate my support for all the actions taken by the Canadian government in Haiti in response to the recent crisis. These measures are in place to continue the commitment made many years ago to this country in the West Indies to promote democracy and sustainable development. This commitment has intensified following the events of the past weeks.

We are currently at a critical time in Haiti's history. In the short term, Canadian troops will help restore order so that democracy can truly take hold. In the long term, our commitment, together with our international partners, will be the gauge of success of these initiatives.

I am proud that the Government of Canada is taking its responsibilities multilaterally, based on current information and with an eye to the future. This will be the key to a happy ending in Haiti, and Canada will be able to proudly say that it made a significant contribution and took a leadership role that was very fitting under the circumstances.

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Chair, what has happened in Haiti is a tragedy. It is a tragedy for democracy, for the Haitian people and for President Aristide. What has taken place is a coup d'état, the 33rd in the tragic history of that country, the poorest country in our hemisphere.

The elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, has stepped down. He was forced out by France and the United States in an absolutely undemocratic, unjust and illegal manner. The CARICOM countries, the Caribbean countries, have demanded an independent international investigation into all of the circumstances surrounding the abduction of President Aristide. We in the NDP wholly support CARICOM in this.

[English]

What has happened in Haiti is an outrage. The trampling of democracy, ignoring international law, ignoring the pleas of CARICOM, the OAS and indeed President Aristide himself for assistance in resisting the brutal overthrow of his regime by those who had been trying since he was first elected in 1991 to overthrow that regime, the remnants of the Tonton Macoute, the thugs in the paramilitary, the drug dealers and others.

Instead of Canada responding to that call for assistance from the democratically elected President Aristide, we stood by, silent, complicit in the overthrow of his government.

Let it be clearly understood that CARICOM and the OAS put to President Aristide and to the rebels a plan that would have involved

power sharing some days before the presidents overthrow. That plan was accepted by President Aristide, but it was rejected out of hand by the rebels. What happened then is shameful. Effectively the Americans, the French, hung President Aristide out to dry.

Therefore, we want to know what was Canada's position in those days leading up to the overthrow of President Aristide. Just as important, what was Canada's position some time before that?

For example, in late January 2003 the then Secretary of State for Latin American and Africa hosted a summit in Ottawa of la francophonie. It included France, representatives of the European Union and the United States to consider the Haitian crisis. Haiti was not even invited to that summit.

We subsequently learned through selected leaks by the minister that consideration was given then to regime change, to the overthrow of President Aristide, one year before it actually took place.

I am calling today for the tabling in the foreign affairs committee the minutes of that summit to let Canadians know exactly what role was played by our government at that summit and to what extent we were even then laying the groundwork, along with the United States and France, for the overthrow of President Aristide.

As well, let it be clearly understood that the opposition to the democratically elected president was funded to a significant extent by the United States. Certainly a number of American congress people have made that point very clearly, as have human rights groups such as MADRE and others.

Perhaps most significant in terms of the desperate poverty of the Haitian people is the fact that since 2002 CARICOM was pleading with the United States to release economic aid and previously approved loans to Haiti. In fact CARICOM foreign ministers made it very clear that unless those funds were released, Haiti faced catastrophe. They stated in 2002 that the actions taken by President Aristide at that time were in the right direction and that the release of funds would assist. They said that not doing this could lead to a deteriorating situation. The United States refused. It kept that devastating economic embargo which had such a destructive impact on the poverty of the people of Haiti, on the poorest of the poor, just as of course it has maintained an illegal embargo, an inhumane embargo on the people of Cuba.

● (2025)

This is a very important point because certainly Canada has stated that we support "a political resolution along the lines of the CARICOM-OAS action plan". However, do we now support the call by CARICOM for an independent international inquiry into all the circumstances that led to the removal of President Aristide from office? What is Canada's position on that? I asked a question of a former Liberal minister, the member of Parliament from Edmonton. He said that he supported the call. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister for Canada-U.S. said that he did not support the call.

Government Orders

What is the position of the Liberal government with respect to the call for an independent international inquiry into the circumstances that led to the removal of President Aristide?

[Translation]

I hope that the Bloc Québécois will support this call for an international investigation into all the circumstances surrounding the illegal kidnapping in Haiti of President Aristide. I have not yet heard the Bloc position on this very important matter.

What is very clear, however, is his insistence that he did not step down voluntarily. President Aristide was forced to relinquish power by France and the United States.

[English]

We also, as New Democrats, condemn the position that is taken by the United States with respect to the repatriation of refugees, which is clearly in violation of the 1952 convention on refugees. What has happened in Haiti is a tragedy. It is also illegal, and we know the United States participated in similar actions in Venezuela in the past.

● (2030)

[Translation]

In conclusion, the NDP calls for the American forces to be replaced by a peacekeeping mission under UN auspices; as soon as feasible, the deployment of an international force mandated to disarm the paramilitaries and destroy the numerous arms caches; a long term solution that would be viable politically and economically for the problems in Haiti, this to include reparations. Noam Chomsky has written eloquently on the matter of reparations and their importance, particularly reparations by France.

We also call for Canadian support and participation in transparent and honest elections in Haiti; a return to full and complete democracy, which would be followed immediately by release of the \$650 million in economic and medical aid to the Haitian government the United States continues to block; long term Canadian and international aid on the financial level in the form of training for a professional Haitian police force, and the international investigation I have already referred to into the circumstances surrounding the forced resignation of Mr. Aristide.

This coup d'état must be condemned by Canadians, by the Canadian government, and we want to know exactly what the role of the Canadian government was in this illegal coup.

[English]

Mr. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to take part in this very important debate this evening.

As the Minister of National Defence has stated, this issue truly is of vital importance to Haiti and to the international community. It is an issue which we cannot afford to ignore or walk away from, and our government is not walking away. We are taking action where action is needed.

[Translation]

In the last 50 years, the Canadian Forces have been involved in numerous peacekeeping operations of one kind or another. Their

experience, expertise and professionalism are second to none and recognized throughout the world.

[English]

In his speech to Parliament yesterday, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan praised Canada's ongoing support to the United Nations and our involvement in UN peacekeeping operations. It should come as no surprise that the international community is looking to Canada to participate in the United Nations mandated multinational interim force to help bring peace and stability to Haiti.

Canada has traditionally had very close ties with Haiti and it is a connection that continues today. We therefore have a strong sense of responsibility to do our part to help that country. At the same time we also have the experience needed to make a difference. Here the record speaks for itself. The Canadian Forces have participated in military missions around the world, missions that have ranged from observing and peacekeeping to more robust combat operations. In recent years we have seen the Canadian Forces deployed to many trouble spots, in the Balkans, Rwanda, the Central African Republic, Angola and East Timor just to name a few.

Even more recently the Canadian Forces members have been in Afghanistan and the Arabian Gulf region, working with our allies in the fight against terrorism. In fact today in Kabul it is a Canadian, Lieutenant General Rick Hillier, who is in charge of the UN-mandated, NATO-led international security assistance force, better known as ISAF. In this role he is in command of some 6,000 troops.

This is a very prestigious position and a tremendous responsibility. The fact that General Hillier was appointed to this position is a testament to the tremendous respect the men and women of the Canadian Forces have earned within the international community, a respect they richly deserve.

That is only a brief summary of some of the experience that Canadian Forces bring to this mission, but more important, for the purposes of this debate, we need to look at their experience in Haiti.

Since the early 1990s, Canada has been involved in efforts to establish and restore democracy in Haiti. Indeed we have participated in several UN missions in that country.

For example, we were involved in the United Nations observer group for the verification of the elections in Haiti in 1990-91. From 1993 to 1994 we contributed a naval contingent to the Haiti embargo enforcement. Some 500 military personnel participated in the United Nations mission in Haiti from 1993 to 1996, helping to maintain a secure and stable environment. Between 1996 and 1997 we sent approximately 750 Canadian Forces personnel to the United Nations support mission in Haiti. In 1997 we contributed a military contingent of around 650 people to the United Nations transition mission in Haiti. While this was our last military deployment in Haiti, the Department of National Defence also assisted with the United Nations civilian police mission in Haiti from 1997 to 2000.

Government Orders

• (2035)

I believe that Canada has shown its commitment to Haiti and we are doing so again today. As our Prime Minister has emphasized, we are committed to helping rebuild Haiti. He has made it clear that the international community cannot afford to make the mistake of pulling out of this troubled nation prematurely.

[*Translation*]

Yesterday, the Secretary-General of the United Nations also pointed out that every member of the international community needs to provide assistance to this troubled nation. He added that only serious long term assistance would ensure Haiti's future stability and prosperity.

Canada's timely decision to deploy about 450 soldiers for a 90-day period is part of the global strategy of our government to find a sustainable solution to the problems facing Haiti and to restore peace and security in that country.

[*English*]

As Kofi Annan said yesterday, "Half-hearted efforts of the past have been insufficient. We cannot afford to fail this time". I sincerely agree with this statement. I know Canadians also believe that we must take seriously our responsibility to help find a lasting and peaceful solution in Haiti.

The government recognizes that a lasting peace depends on more than just the provision of military forces. It depends on a combination of diplomacy, development, and defence, the three Ds that are vital to the long term rebuilding of this and any other troubled country. We are now taking action on all three fronts and are committed to continuing to do so. The Canadian Forces will be a vital part of the three D approach.

I join the Minister of National Defence in expressing my confidence in the ability of the Canadian Forces to carry out this important mission. I know that the forces will once again live up to their well-earned reputation as one of the most skilled, professional, and dedicated militaries in the world. They will help restore stability. They will assist in the delivery of humanitarian aid. They will support local police efforts, and in doing this, they will help make a brighter future for the Haitian people.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Chair, I rise today to speak unfortunately to a situation that is less than desirable, another violent coup d'état in Haiti. It is one of over 30 in its 200 years of existence. It is hard to imagine. Certainly we as Canadians have never faced this type of situation. We should be very thankful for that.

We have seen Canada once again commit our troops to overseas commitments. This time it is 450 troops to Haiti. Canadians believe it is important that we do that. Canadians really want Canada to be a country that can make commitments to deal with situations such as an overthrow of democratic regimes around the world, such as the overthrow of the Aristide regime in Haiti. It is important to Canadians that we have the capability to help in those situations.

Unfortunately, we are losing that capability all the time. In fact, this was a seat of the pants commitment. We have no coherent foreign policy any more. We have not had a new foreign policy

white paper in 10 years. There is a lack of leadership on the part of the Prime Minister and the government. It is unimaginable that the government does not have plans for dealing with situations such as this one.

For that reason we have seen another situation where a commitment was made overnight without appropriate consultation. This is two months after the head of the army said we simply cannot commit more troops overseas. The head of the army said we cannot meet a new deployment to Afghanistan, that we will carry through on the commitment we have made, but we cannot continue that deployment at anywhere near the level of troops that we have in Afghanistan now. He said we simply cannot take on new tasks. Yet, the forces have to do what they are told. The government committed them to a new task whether they could handle it or not.

Who pays the price? It is our serving men and women in the Canadian Forces who pay the price. This is a shameful way to run a country. A ship without a captain and a crew would be the best comparison to the government when it comes to foreign policy, to our military and in fact when it comes to most things right now. The government is too busy answering to the scandals that it has been involved in. We are uncovering a new one almost every day.

What will Canada's role be in the next situation that comes up? We have made the commitment to Haiti of 450 troops. What will Canada's commitment be to the next situation that arises? We know there will be more. We live in a world that is more unstable than ever before.

When we ask the government the same question we cannot get an answer. There is no answer because the government does not have a foreign policy. This is completely unacceptable. Canadians expect more.

Canada's military pays the price again. In the past we have seen a very large commitment in the Persian gulf and for the war in Iraq. We have seen a very large commitment in Afghanistan. We still have troops committed to the Balkans. We still have commitments in many other places around the world. I believe there are some 21 commitments around the world.

Our troops are overstretched. They are being asked again and again to go into these situations without the proper equipment. That simply is not acceptable. Canadians know it is not acceptable. The government should know it is not acceptable.

It bothers me when I hear members, such as some members who have spoken here tonight, say that Canada has to do something. They say we have to be there to help. We have to deal with the situation where the democratic government has been overthrown. Yet those same people say we should not be spending money on our military. I want to know how Canada is supposed to help deal with situations such as this if we do not have proper resources in the military.

Government Orders

The Liberals have chopped more than 30% from the military funding in the 10 years they have been in government. The current Prime Minister was finance minister during the time that 30% was chopped from the military budget. Our troops are being asked to do more now than they have ever been asked to do since before the second world war. They are being asked to do more with less. They are being asked to do more with less money. They are being asked to do more with fewer troops.

● (2040)

We had 80,000 troops when this government took office back in 1993 and now we are down to 55,000 active troops. This is unacceptable. Some new equipment has been purchased by the military but, generally, the equipment is worse than it was when this government took office years ago. What would we expect when we see 30% cut from the budget? It is simply unacceptable. Yet the demands are more. We are reaching a crisis breaking point with the Canadian military.

We do have a tremendous resource in our military. We have well trained men and women who are as good as any in the world but they are near a breaking point. They simply cannot continue to meet commitment after commitment that the government has asked them to do.

If the government would make a commitment to spend the money necessary to rebuild and equip the military, to increase the strength to 80,000 again and to put a foreign policy in place, then we could respond very effectively to situations like this. We could help reinstate democracy. We could make long term commitments to countries like Haiti and hopefully help to bring about a long term solution to the problem so we do not have a coup every few years. However with the resources our military has been given, we simply cannot continue to do that.

As a result, Canada's relevance, when it comes to dealing with situations like this around the world, has been reduced dramatically and our reputation has been tarnished.

When we see Kofi Annan sitting here in the House of Commons, like we did just yesterday, saying that Canada is such an important player, I think he was talking about the Canada of 10 years ago. Quite frankly, the Canada of today cannot meet the commitments it should be meeting when it comes to situations like the one we currently have in Haiti, and that is a shame. That is something Canadians really do not like. The government has to understand that and has to start making a new commitment to rebuilding the military, which is such a key part of our foreign policy.

We simply cannot be players when democracies are thrown aside unless we have combat capable military forces to help stabilize the situation and then help keep the situation stable so that democratic regimes can be re-established. It is so important and we have so few resources left to do that. Our foreign policy void makes that more difficult.

Through all of this, I think Canadians generally know that the military budget being slashed by 30%, the number of members serving in the Canadian Forces being reduced from 80,000 down to 55,000 and our troops being sent over without proper equipment, is not proper and right.

Yet, through all of this, what do we see? We see the government spending \$100 million on Challenger jets so that the Prime Minister and cabinet ministers can travel in luxury when our military is starved of the resources it needs to help deal with situations like Haiti.

Today the newest scandal has been uncovered: \$90 million missing from military spending. The latest corruption scandal ripped \$90 million from a military desperate for the resources it needs to handle a situation like Haiti. This is the latest in the scandal a day type situation the government is facing right now. That is inappropriate.

Canadians are upset by the lack of responsibility when it comes to spending their tax dollars. They are upset by the out and out corruption the government is involved in on an ongoing basis, and has been involved in over the last 10 years. More and more of that corruption is coming to the surface but, quite frankly, it does not help us in dealing with situations where we should be helping, such as the situation in Haiti.

What we need is new government in this country. We need a new government that will make the commitment necessary to the Canadian military, that will put in place a foreign policy so that we will know ahead of time what we are going to do in the next situation like Haiti, and there will be a next situation.

● (2045)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I wonder if the member could tell us what he knows about the document entitled "Northern Dimension of Canada's Foreign Policy".

● (2050)

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Chair, it has been 10 years since Canada put out a white paper on foreign affairs, and 10 years is too long. The last document is outdated. The military is nowhere near the position it was in 1994 when the last foreign affairs paper was put out.

I am not talking about a patch up document, like the one to which the member is referring. I am talking about a complete new white paper on foreign affairs. In other words, a white paper saying that this is what Canada should do in situations like this and this is what Canada should do in situations like that. The government needs to put forward the resources necessary, especially to the military, the police forces in some cases, namely our foreign service, and so on.

Our foreign policy is completely outdated with nothing new except a few patch up documents along the way, and the member knows that is what he is referring to.

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I have listened with interest to the remarks of the hon. gentleman. I listened earlier to one of his colleagues speak about what happened in Haiti as being a regime change and that he regretted the fact that Canada had not been involved in regime change last time.

Government Orders

I was very interested by the member's stirring words about what his party would do if it had more armed forces. What is his party's theory on this? Are we going to go into a regime change by ourselves? Are we going to decide to do these things on our own? Would the hon. member help with this? What is his party's position? Does he believe that we need the United Nations to give legitimacy to what we do, or does he just believe that Canada and other countries can go off and use our military in any way in which they deem appropriate at any given particular moment in time?

Since he seems to be so anxious that we have a proper military, and he does not feel that this government has a foreign policy, which I certainly disagree with, where is the coherence in the policy of the party opposite on these issues?

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Chair, I find it shocking that the Minister of Foreign Affairs would somehow indicate that we do not need a strong military to help carry out our foreign affairs policy. That is an absurd position for a foreign affairs minister to take. Quite frankly, I am baffled by that because part of what we do need in a foreign affairs policy is the ability to help stabilize situations such as the one in Haiti or the one in Afghanistan. I believe the minister was the Minister of Foreign Affairs when our troops were sent to Afghanistan. Why he would think the military is not an important part of what is needed to help carry out foreign policy absolutely baffles me.

In terms of what we want, we put out our own foreign policy paper because we have ideas as to what we should do. We have a plan. The leader of the former Canadian Alliance Party, and now a member of the new Conservative Party, myself as defence critic and our party put out a substantial document on the Canadian military and what it should be. That military would certainly be able to deal with the situation in Haiti and be an important part of that. It would certainly be able to meet commitments like that made in Afghanistan. It would certainly be able to meet the commitments that were made in the war on Iraq in the Persian Gulf. It would certainly be able to continue to meet commitments in the Balkans and situations like that.

It is absurd to think we could do any of that, that we would be relevant at all, if we do not have a military to help stabilize the situation so that a democratic regime can be put in place. I think that regime change is pretty important. When a democratic government is overthrown, it is quite important that we have a regime change to put in place, either that democratic government again or a different democratic government, at least to stabilize the situation. That is the kind of regime change that is productive and the kind of regime change I am sure the foreign affairs minister would support.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Chair, I think it was a bit of an insult to the Secretary General of the United Nations to say that he was not talking about Canada today, that he was factually incorrect to say that we do not have the defence to do anything.

We had General Leslie in the gallery the other day who received a huge applause. I would not say that was for doing nothing. That was for the tremendous contribution Canada is making in Afghanistan. I was there. We have roughly 2,000 troops and many other nations have 10, 20 or 30 troops in that particular community. We are providing an incredible role in peacekeeping. The general said that

we save thousands and thousands of lives. I would not consider saving thousands of lives as doing nothing.

I want to ask the member about his policy. We have fairly close to a balanced budget. There is not a lot of spare cash. We still have a lot of child poverty. We have regions that are poorer than other regions and they need cash. We are putting in new programs for disabled people. Our aboriginal peoples have lower living standards and they have more deaths during childbirth.

What programs would the member take the money from to provide these largely increased levels of defence? He has not explained to the foreign affairs minister what he would use those increased levels of defence for.

• (2055)

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Chair, I, as much as anybody in the House, am proud of what the Canadian military men and women can do. They can do that because they are good men and women. They make do with so little, so often, and they do. We should be proud of General Hillier who is heading up our troops in Afghanistan. He is a good man and well trained. In spite of the lack of funding on the part of the government and in spite of the equipment the troops have been forced to use, they do good work because they are good people and they are well trained. I am proud of them for that.

I am upset with the government. The member asked where the money will come from. How about \$100 million coming from nonsense like buying new luxury jets for cabinet ministers? How about the \$90 million, which we just found out about today, that was lost somehow in contracts at the Department of National Defence? How about the sponsorship program where, as far as we know, at least \$100 million was paid to Liberal friends?

That is where we could get the money from. We stop paying money to Liberal friends. We have seen scandal after scandal in which the government has been involved.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Chair, I am pleased to take part in this take-note debate. It is always a good idea to have members of Parliament address issues like our missions abroad, treaty ratification and other such things that the Bloc feels are not only the prerogative of the executive but also need to be debated by the legislative power and Parliament.

Like most of our constituents, as was pointed out by my hon. colleagues from Mercier and Saint-Jean, we were all extremely saddened, appalled and worried by the tragedies we have witnessed on a daily basis in the last three months.

Government Orders

I have been watching the situation in Haiti quite closely, since I live with someone who is from Haiti and who still has relatives in Les Cayes, a small city, albeit not so small compared to others.

I always keep in mind that the people of Haiti, just like the people of Quebec and of Canada, hope that the Haitian leaders and the international community can find a way to work together in order to restore conditions conducive to peace, prosperity and development to that country.

This is certainly an appropriate time to talk about this issue, since we all listened with great interest to the speech given by His Excellency, United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. For the first time in the history of the United Nations, this is a man who reached the highest ranks in the United Nations by being himself a product of the United Nations, since he was at the World Health Organization, in Geneva, for a long time.

While following this horror story that Haitians lived daily in the last few months, I was, as were many Quebecers and Canadians, somewhat disappointed with Canada's position. I know that values of peace are part of our values as Canadians and Quebecers. I also know that, in 1945, when 49 delegations met in San Francisco, there was in the Canadian delegation, of course, prime minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, but also two future prime ministers.

The Minister of Heritage will remember—not because she was present, because she is young, but because she knows history—that Louis St-Laurent was a member of the delegation. There was William Lyon Mackenzie King and also Mr. Pearson, two prime ministers who were going to play an extremely important role in this peacekeeper concept.

Kofi Annan's speech to parliamentarians reminded us how much hope is being pinned on Quebec and Canada to help maintain peace. Unfortunately, Haiti has been a dictatorship for far too long, since a dictator ruled the country from 1971 to 1990.

In 1991, President Aristide was elected for the first time. He was later overthrown. He returned to power in 1994-95. However, this is food for thought. We must think about how fragile democracy is in certain parts of the world, not that Haiti does not want democracy. It is important to make that distinction.

The question we can ask and reflect on concerns the fact that President Aristide left on February 29. One week later, the extent of Canada's participation in the peacekeeping mission was still unknown.

The Security Council is considered the executive branch of the United Nations. I hope that there will be a take-note debate—I am certain that my colleague from Mercier is calling wholeheartedly for one—on UN reform.

• (2100)

There is much to say. It is important to reflect. We believe in the UN but reform is needed.

I study part-time at the University of Ottawa. I am taking international public law. Half of the course focuses on international public law and the role of the UN. It is extremely important that, as parliamentarians, we can reflect on these issues.

Later, I will ask the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who is here, to talk a bit about why there was a one-week gap between the resignation of President Aristide and the decision about the extent of Canada's participation in this first interim force. The Security Council made its decision late Saturday night. There are 450 Canadians now assigned to this force, as well as logistical support of six helicopters. I understand that this interim international force, in accordance with chapter VII of the UN Charter, will be followed by a stabilization force that should, we hope, lay a solid foundation for peace.

We should also remember that official development aid, about which the Bloc Québécois has asked many questions, definitely does not reflect our abilities, aspirations and generosity, and also does not reflect existing needs. Unless I am mistaken, the figures that I read suggest that Canada's contribution is diminishing somewhat. We are giving less in 2004 than we did 10 years ago. In the case of Haiti specifically, I read that, in 2002-03, Canada gave \$28.85 million to Haiti. This is of course a significant contribution, but is it not our duty, as parliamentarians, to do more?

I was reading a letter sent by an organization in the riding of Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, which I represent here. It is the Development and Peace organization, which was founded in 1967 by the Conference of Catholic Bishops. This organization is located next to the Marguerite-De Lajemmerais school. It sent a letter to the Prime Minister, the minister responsible for the Francophonie and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who certainly had a chance to read it.

This letter is important because it reminds us that the primary responsibility of the interim force currently in Haiti is the disarmament process. There can be no peace and no plans for the future if the various factions do not lay down their arms. Of course, we know the expertise of Development and Peace, which was founded in 1967 and which is present in some 40 countries.

This organization told us about all the groups involved. There are of course the *chimères*, the former militias that unfortunately remained faithful to the ousted president; there are also the dissenting *chimères*, which regrouped in an army called the cannibal army and which were mostly present in the Gonaïves region, and there are of course the factions of Guy Philippe and Louis-Jodel Champlain.

I think it must be very clear that the mandate given to the interim force, as well as the mandate that will be given, at the end of the three months, to the peace stabilization force, must of course be focussed on disarmament. This is the first goal to achieve. Following disarmament, there will be, of course, the whole issue of rebuilding in association with civil society. There will also be the whole issue of education, food, supplies, public health. These issues will be part of the various goals of those who want to become involved in international development assistance, in public development aid. These are missions that will be very important for all those who believe in a future for Haiti.

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• (2105)

I think that, as Quebeckers and Canadians, we must say clearly that this is not the end of our involvement, this is the beginning. This is not the end financially, since we will have to do more, and this is not the end logistically either.

I saw that, in the second stage of the proposed operation, there will be 5,000 peacekeepers. I see that Brazil is seeking command leadership. If I am not mistaken, we do not know exactly what the Canadian government involvement will be in this second stage.

My time is up. Mr. Chair, you have been so quiet that I thought you would let me continue. We will proceed with questions.

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I hope you will permit me to answer a question that the hon. member asked me during his speech. He asked me how we can explain the—

The Chair: The question should be coming from the minister's side and the reply from the other. If there is a question, you may reply and then ask another question. We are clear on this. The minister has the floor.

Hon. Bill Graham: Mr. Chairman, I understood the game well. Since the opposition member asked me a question, I will ask him a question once again by asking him to answer the question that he asked me and, therefore, everyone will be very happy. We may proceed in this fashion.

The issue is very important. He asked me why it took one week to know the extent of Canada's contribution to the UN authorized force. I suggest to him, and I ask the member to respond, that this was totally reasonable.

First, Canada sent troops to save lives. We made a humanitarian contribution. The armed forces were there to get Canadians and other foreigners off the island and to save lives.

Then, an international and multilateral intervention was required. Planning was needed for this. Canada is playing its role. I hope the member will agree with me that we are playing a major role in this, an appropriate role that is in keeping with requests made by our colleagues, since this is a multilateral force in which mainly Americans, the French and Canadians, as well as others, are involved.

I hope that the member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve agrees with me that the important thing in this matter is that Canada is acting within a multilateral force, and not unilaterally. To me, at least, this explains why this force had to be planned in order to take into account the political situation and the forces involved.

• (2110)

Mr. Réal Ménard: Mr. Chair, I agree with the minister that in order for intervention to be effective in this conflict it had to be multilateral. No one thinks Canada should have acted alone.

I respectfully submit that it would not have been unreasonable for us to have expected the minister to act more quickly, especially since in other forums he firmly stated that Canada was ready. However,

and he will correct me if I am wrong, the fact remains that chronologically, from the time President Aristide left on February 29 to the time it was determined we would send 450 soldiers and 6 CH-146 helicopters, a week went by.

Given the urgency of the situation, the minister should not take this personally, but in view of public policy and Canada's foreign policy, the timeframe was not reasonable and was too long. That does not mean Canada's contribution is not significant. It is a matter of humanitarian consideration. I know that a delegation, including the minister responsible for the Francophonie, went to Haiti. They had hoped for peace up to the last minute. I completely understand that situation.

However, leadership requires a certain degree of swiftness. Without being partisan—something that is quite beyond me—a week is too long given the urgency of the situation and the seed of hope the minister planted with some of the statements he made in a number of forums.

[English]

Hon. Jean Augustine (Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Status of Women), Lib.): Mr. Chair, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to participate in the debate on Haiti.

Allow me to begin by saying that Canadians have been deeply moved by recent events in Haiti. As a member born in the Caribbean region, I am doubly moved by the situation.

Our Prime Minister has made it clear that Canada is determined to play a key role in multinational efforts to restore peace and security in Haiti. This is more than mere words. Strengthening democracy, ending conflict, bolstering human rights in the Americas are among Canada's key goals.

Haiti is important to the stability of the entire region. The Caribbean community Caricom continues to help build a peaceful resolution in Haiti. We support the earlier work of Caricom and the Organization of American States which serve as the foundations for the current efforts to rebuild Haiti's democratic institutions that will provide a better future for all nations.

Canada fully supports the Organization of American States' special mission in Haiti. On February 20, we announced an additional \$5 million to the mission.

As a hemispheric neighbour, as a country that is home to people from many Haitians and as a fellow member of the family of francophone nations and the Organization of American States, Canada will continue to help Haitians build a peaceful and democratic society.

As a result of recent discussions with the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, our Prime Minister has pledged to send 450 Canadian soldiers to take part in peacekeeping efforts in Haiti. Just yesterday, the Prime Minister also committed to another \$5 million in aid.

In the longer term a contingent of RCMP officers will train Haitian police. We are also providing food aid and humanitarian assistance, primarily through CIDA, the Canadian International Development Agency.

Government Orders

Canada has long played a role in working to improve the economic, social and political conditions in Haiti. I think we all know this. All these efforts underscore the deep ties between Canada and Haiti. They include sending peacekeeping troops in the early 1990s. As well, Canada has provided ongoing support that includes contributions to the special mission of the Organization of American States, and a significant amount of development assistance, as well as short term projects related to job creation and food aid.

We know we have a commitment and there is much more in selfless efforts by all of us over the years; selfless efforts of many dedicated Canadians who have gone to Haiti as individuals or with NGOs, non-governmental organizations. So many people are making a real difference in the lives of people through their volunteer work in Haiti.

Because Haiti is a country of great beauty and unfulfilled promise, a country that never fails to make a profound and lasting impression on those who visit. Amidst today's troubles let us not forget the dignity and the strength of the Haitian people who have inspired Canadians and others through their artistry, their ingenuity and their enduring humanity in face of enormous challenges.

Here in Canada, Haitians and Canadians of Haitian descent make an enormous contribution to our society in many spheres of endeavour, people like Bruny Surin, a member of Canada's gold medal men's relay team at the 1996 summer Olympics, or like Radio Canada's Michaele Jean.

● (2115)

There are thousands of people of Haitian origin in Canada who have been concerned and troubled by what is happening in Haiti. They are eager to contribute and help restore a democratic and prosperous society in Haiti in a way that builds on their experience in Canada. Immigrants from Haiti have not only added to Canada's rich multicultural mix, they have brought skills and experiences that benefit our communities, our economy and our society.

Canada, as one of the world's most multicultural, multi-ethnic countries, places great value in our relationship with the world beyond our borders. Why is this so? It is because we welcome newcomers from every corner of the globe to our doorstep. We take pride in our cultural diversity and we encourage newcomers to retain their cultural identity. Counting more than 200 ethnic origins among us, Canada is a microcosm of the world.

In recognition of this reality, 33 years ago, the Government of Canada adopted a multiculturalism policy aimed at creating a society in which multicultural heritage would be valued and all Canadians, regardless of their racial, ethnic or religious background, would have a voice and the opportunity to participate fully. Every Canadian is equal under the law and has the right to fully participate in our society. This right is so important to Canadians that it is enshrined in law in the Canadian Multiculturalism Act.

While policies and laws are important, it is the value we Canadians place on respect that will make full participation for all a reality. As individuals, communities, institutions and governments,

we must practise respect every day at work, in our neighbourhoods, in our schools and in our homes with our families. Of course the outcome of this has a direct impact on our communities, our institutions and our society. It also has a direct impact on how we regard our place in the world and how others view Canada.

I will quote from the Speech from the Throne recently delivered. It states:

—peace and freedom, human rights and the rule of law, diversity, respect and democracy are the values that form the foundation of Canada's experience and our success. They are, in truth, potentially our most valuable export.

Canada cares deeply about our neighbours in the hemisphere. We care deeply about the cause of peace and the right of every human being to live in dignity and security. As a proudly multicultural society, we care about the hopes and the dreams of all of those around the world who are seeking a more prosperous, peaceful and secure future for their children and for themselves.

This is more than a vision. It is a matter of real commitment on the part of the Government of Canada. Our vision, our commitment, our enduring adherence to the values and ideals that our country holds dear compel Canadians to deeply empathize with the Haitian people. As such we are determined to redouble our efforts to accompany Haitians as they build a stable, prosperous and democratic society. It is in this spirit that this evening we are speaking to the aspirations of the Haitian people.

● (2120)

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I just want to perhaps use the House's time to draw on the minister's personal expertise.

The minister comes from the Caribbean region herself. She has family there. She has experience there. She has deep roots in the Caribbean community in her own city of Toronto. The government has sought to work closely with CARICOM as a way of recognizing that it is the people of the Caribbean community themselves who best can contribute to Haitians making their political system work better.

This is complicated because there are British traditions, French traditions and other traditions in the Caribbean. The minister spoke movingly about these issues. Could she help us from her own experience as to how she sees us working with the CARICOM nations as a way of helping Haiti come through to a political culture which will enable us to solve their problems?

Hon. Jean Augustine: Mr. Chair, in response I can use something which is quite close to home. When things happen in our neighbourhoods, they are influenced by what goes on in the neighbourhood. Haiti is in the neighbourhood of so many of the Caricom people and is part of the Caricom family.

Government Orders

From my work, interests and conversations with people who are from the region, especially in the Toronto area, I have learned that there is much pain and hope for Caricom as it sets things on the table. There are expectations as to how some resolutions could have taken place. There is a sense at this point in time that they need to hear from Canada and they need us to stand with them as they deal with the present issue. It is something in the neighbourhood. It is in the interest of the entire Caricom region that there be peace and a resolution to this conflict.

We are in the year that the United Nations has declared as freedom from slavery. The history of Haiti is an interesting one. It is very interesting for those of us who have not read about the struggles that have taken place. The Haitian people have gone through quite a bit over many years.

Whatever Canada can do and the commitments we have made at this point in time are very important. We have to move that forward. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has a responsibility with all the Caricom nations to continue the conversation, to reach out with a hand of friendship and to give them the assurance that Canada is standing with them at this point when there is stress in all the Caricom states.

● (2125)

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Chair, despite the late hour, it is a pleasure for me to rise to say a few words on the subject of Haiti, and more specifically in my role as the national defence critic for the official opposition, the Conservative Party of Canada.

A number of my colleagues in the Conservative Party have addressed this motion tonight. Obviously they are on record as speaking for the party in support of doing what we can as a nation to assist the Haitian people during this time of strife, trouble, turmoil and, regrettably, bloodshed in their country.

Over the last week or so I have said many times during interviews that this has become a front page story in Canada. I believe that all Canadians have a lot of empathy for people and a lot of sympathy for those who are not able to protect themselves and who, through no fault of their own, find themselves in a situation where their nation is torn apart, in this case by civil war between warring factions.

We cannot lose sight of the fact that most of the people are caught in the middle of this. They are innocent people who probably do not ask anything more of life than the average Canadian does. We just want a peaceful place to work, a decent job and a decent income to provide a decent way of life for ourselves, our spouses and our families. I suspect that is true for most of the Haitian people as well. Unfortunately, they are caught in the middle of this political unrest in their country. Our hearts go out to the Haitian people, as speakers from all parties in the House of Commons have said during this debate tonight.

In my role as defence critic, I also want to speak on behalf of our young men and women in the armed forces because I have a lot of concern for them. I have a lot of sympathy for them when they, like the Haitian people, are thrust into a situation not of their own making. The government made a commitment and they have been called upon to go into harm's way.

Many people can say that they knew that when they signed up for the forces. That is true and our armed forces personnel go willingly. They recognize that it is a part of the job, part of the service they committed to on behalf of Canada and indeed for other countries in many cases. They go where they are sent and for all intents and purposes they go uncomplainingly and with what meagre resources they are provided with. They go there and they do an exemplary job. Regardless of partisan politics, I think all members of the House recognize the tremendous contribution that our young men and women make repeatedly in so-called hot spots around the world.

I am concerned about them. It seems to many of us, and not only for those of us in this chamber but I suspect for Canadians across our land, that the government makes commitments but does not explain to Canadians what criteria those commitments are based upon. We see that again with this latest deployment of roughly 450 troops to Haiti.

In speaking to the motion earlier this evening, our foreign affairs critic made reference to that. He asked the government to explain what criteria it uses to judge turmoil in other countries when it comes to the decision to commit our young men and women to these hot spots and to go into harm's way, whether it is Bosnia, the Golan Heights, Sierra Leone in Africa, Afghanistan and now Haiti. Of course, preceding those examples is an almost endless list of countries that we have been involved in dating back to just after the second world war.

● (2130)

I think that what Canadians are asking their government for is some clear indication of what foreign policy these types of decisions are based upon. As I said at the outset of my remarks, it is not that the average Canadian does not have a lot of sympathy for those people in wartorn countries around the world who find themselves in perilous situations. All of us as members of Parliament hear from our constituents all the time that they indeed do have a lot of sympathy for these other peoples. They want to help and they want to have our armed forces over there helping.

Earlier this evening during the to and fro and give and take of this debate, I talked about the budget. Another concern I have is one that has been well identified, not only by the Conservative Party of Canada but even by the government's own members who sit on the House of Commons Standing Committee for National Defence and Veterans Affairs and the committee from the other place. It has been well identified, both within Parliament and by many outside organizations that have done studies over the last while, that our military in this country is underfunded.

That is why the Conservative Party of Canada is strongly committed to increasing the funds to be made available, as just one of the recommendations and commitments we make to the Canadian people heading into the next election campaign. It is our commitment to spend substantially more on our Canadian Forces. While the Prime Minister has made a similar commitment since coming into office, we have yet to see it. Hopefully we will see it when the budget is tabled in this place in a couple of weeks' time.

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I found it interesting when I was asking questions of the Minister of National Defence earlier this evening in the debate. When I asked him where the money would be coming from, he used the number \$38 million as an estimate for the 90 day deployment of some 450 troops. Obviously we all respect the fact that it is an estimate. Hopefully it is an estimate that is a lot closer than the one this same Liberal government used for what it would cost taxpayers for the gun registry.

Whatever the case may be, we have to understand that this is going to cost money. My concern as the defence critic, as someone who is trying to look out for the interests of our men and women in the armed forces, is that this money should not come out of the existing budget of the Canadian Forces, which is already stretched to the limit. That has been said repeatedly this evening and, as I said, has been highlighted in many studies over the past couple of years. The forces need a lot more money, not less. I am hopeful that whatever the deployment is going to cost we will see that outside of DND's budget when the government tables its budget in the coming weeks.

I want to close on this note. There is another promise that I hope the Prime Minister intends to keep. He has repeatedly said in the past few months that he does not intend, like his predecessor Jean Chrétien did, to send our young men and women into harm's way without the best possible equipment. That is the term he has used. Certainly we on this side of the House support that, but I have not yet seen him back that up with the commitment. That is what we are looking for in the budget.

Pardon me if I am a just a little cynical, because this is the same individual who as finance minister cut some \$20 billion cumulatively over the last decade from the Department of National Defence budget. Now he is saying he wants to put some of that back in so the forces can have the best possible equipment. I am certainly in support of that. Many members are, from both sides of the House. Hopefully the Liberal government really does mean what it says and will do what it says in this regard.

• (2135)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I think the previous member's speech is a very thoughtful and positive addition to the evening.

I would like to give one personal opinion in relation to the cuts in defence, having been chair of our defence caucus for some time. I am a big supporter of defence. Defence should be well equipped and funded. But I also could not stand by as we were losing more potential to help our defence through paying interest payments on the debt. The cross-governmental discipline that allowed us to get out of deficit and to make the increasing contributions we are now making to defence, education and health care was a necessary step.

I want to speak for my constituency at the moment too. One of my constituents in particular was a bit concerned that the president may not have voluntarily left office, so I was very gratified to hear UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan outline the situation, that being that the president had resigned and was replaced through the constitution in the normal course of events.

I was also very happy to see our type of action, both with troops and with aid.

One of the three pillars of the new Prime Minister's philosophy is ensuring that Canada lives up to our potential in the world. We are well respected and can play a lot of roles. I was really proud in seeing our reaction to this crisis as a step in that direction, because I did not think we had the very significant resources that we have contributed in troops and of course in increasing our aid, which has been increasing gradually over recent years. That quick action of aid to Haiti was very gratifying. In playing that role of our place in the world I think we are admired for it and people expect it of us. I hope we can continue to work to protect that aid to other countries from those on the ground who would try to use it for other purposes.

Haiti is the poorest country in this hemisphere. Canada has and will continue to work with Haitians to address this challenge. We will stand by the people of Haiti. They can count on Canada. Yesterday, in response to Secretary-General Annan's appeal for further aid for Haiti, Canada immediately pledged \$5 million.

Canada is deeply concerned about the lack of security, stability and democracy in Haiti. Canada has a longstanding relationship with Haiti and a long term commitment to assist Haitians as they struggle to put in place the conditions that support sustainable development, that is, social, political, economic and environmentally sustainable development that will lead to lasting peace and prosperity.

This is a complex endeavour. Building capacity in governance, democracy and security is not as simple as building a school or a hospital. It takes time. It takes perseverance. It requires us to make a commitment to long term change and to learn, as we work, about what will succeed in showing long term results.

[*Translation*]

It is essential to be able to count on solid partnerships in order to address the complex problems surrounding the development of Haiti. The government is well aware that we need to work closely with each other, here in Canada, within the international community, and with the developing countries, if we are to achieve lasting change and contribute to making the world a better place.

The Canadian International Development Agency, CIDA, is working in close conjunction with National Defence and Foreign Affairs in order to help deal with the present humanitarian crisis and to strengthen security, human rights, democracy and good governance in that country.

As the Minister of National Defence has explained, Canada will be deploying another 450 soldiers in order to help restore peace in Haiti as part of the international force.

• (2140)

As the Minister of Foreign Affairs has said, Canada is working closely with its international partners through the United Nations, and with like-minded states such as our partners in the Organization of American States, the OAS, and Caricom, the Caribbean common market.

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Now that constitutional order is beginning to be restored in Haiti, the Government of Canada will be working closely with the president and the interim prime minister. The commitment of Haitian leaders to a true reform will be what brings about change, restoration of an atmosphere of lasting security, stability and sustainable development.

That said, security alone cannot bring peace and prosperity for the long term.

[*English*]

The Haitian people cannot feel secure when they are living in poverty and without access to health care, education, employment and in conditions of environmental degradation.

CIDA's role is to help people gain access to the means to build better lives for themselves, their families and their communities.

That access must be fairly distributed or its unfairness risks fostering more rivalry, hostility and conflict. Efforts to pursue sustainable paths of development must also be about respect and equity, justice and democracy, and fair access to resources.

Countries in crisis, like Haiti, require the support of the international community in leading and managing the development process. In this period of transition, it will be essential that an equitable, coordinated division of labour is worked out between the UN and the OAS, with each organization taking responsibility for the areas that are best suited to its strengths and capacities.

[*Translation*]

Canada is using new international guidelines to make short term progress in the area of development, while also providing the government with the tools to allow it to fulfill this critical long term responsibility.

This is an approach based on flexibility and open dialogue, which is aimed at identifying the stakeholders who will be able to bring about the change, and also other partners from civil society, the private sector and the various levels of government.

In the short term, we want to restore security and meet fundamental needs.

In the long term, Canada will focus its efforts on six priorities: basic education, health, economic development, human rights, justice and security.

Canada must respect its commitment to restore peace, security, stability and prosperity in Haiti. We cannot ignore what is going on in our neighbourhood, in the Americas, and we must turn our good intentions into concrete action.

[*English*]

The minister has spoken about the importance of stability in Haiti for the entire region. I want to reiterate what continuing instability means for Haitians and potentially for others if this situation spreads to other countries.

It means that people my age in Haiti will have outlived their life expectancy. It means that more people, especially children, will sicken and die because of drinking unsafe water. It means that more parents will be unable to properly nourish their children.

Canadians want to make a difference in the world. We are making a difference in Haiti. Over the last few years thousands of Canadians have worked in Haiti.

Thanks to Canadian assistance since the mid-1990s more than three million children have been vaccinated and about 5,000 women have received support in family planning, reproductive health, human rights and political life. The 35,000 people of Jacmel inhabit the only city in Haiti that has, thanks to Canadian aid, electricity 24 hours a day.

There is still a very long way to go in seeing Haiti out of the current crisis and well on the road to sustainable development and prosperity. We must continue our important work in Haiti. We must strengthen our partnerships with all partners in Haiti, in Canada and internationally, who are working for the same goals.

● (2145)

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Chair, I would like to commend my colleague from the Yukon for a well thought out speech. I want to take exception though to a remark he made right at the start of his speech.

I think he left the impression with those viewing the debate at home this evening that somehow the Prime Minister, when he was finance minister and the Liberal government had to make the cuts to the military that I was referring to in my remarks. I think he said something along the lines that the cuts were necessary if we were going to balance the budget and then start running surpluses to pay down the debt, to make the commitments that all Canadians want to see to health care and education and those types of programs.

While we too are committed to this, when I was sitting listening to him, I was reminded of something that I have often said to my children. I have three children, two girls and a boy, who are the ripe old ages of 25, 23 and my son is 21. Ever since they were toddlers I tried to impress upon them that life is all about choices. Each one of us makes choices when we get out of bed in the morning. When we get out of bed we can choose to get up with a smile and face the day with a smile on our faces or we can choose to get up and be grumpy, and probably the day will be a reflection of the mood that we are in.

We all make choices. I would submit that the government and the Prime Minister when he was finance minister made some choices. They chose to spend, and the number is now upwards of \$2 billion, on a gun registry, to register duck hunters' firearms. The Liberals chose to spend a lot of money whether it was on sponsorship programs or HRDC boondoggles.

Over the last 10 years that I have been here and that the government has been in power, I would submit it has made some bad choices. I would hope that the hon. member recognizes that as well. I would hope that we are not going to see some of those bad choices when we see the budget, for example, in a week or two. I hope that we will see the government committed to putting the money back into not only our military but into supporting missions like the one we have now undertaken to Haiti, so that we can do the job that all Canadians want us to do.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Chair, of course as the member knows, we disagree on the distribution of expenses, but I would say that he is correct that the government made choices.

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I would look to the choices it made, to the very large increases in health care which is such a priority for Canadians. I would look to the choices it made when it established the millennium fund which is the largest scholarship program in the country's history. Canadians put such an important emphasis on education.

I would look to the huge increases in research and development so that Canada can stay in touch with the knowledge based economy. I would look to the largest, and named the most important, recent social program in history, the child tax benefit and the increase in that.

I would look to the choice made to pay down the debt and the choice to make the largest tax cut in history. By making those choices, Canadian companies can then compete with other countries in the world and prosper enough to hire more employees, and we can make the contributions to health care, education and defence.

Mr. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the member for Yukon for his comments and pick up on the interaction between him and the member for Prince George—Peace River.

Governments do make choices; that is absolutely right. Although all of us in this House are troubled with the recent difficulties with the sponsorship program, I wonder if we sometimes forget the fiscal performance of the government over the last 10 years.

We eliminated a \$42 billion deficit. We are actually considered among the nations of the world as the fiscal miracle by eliminating a deficit of \$42 billion in three years, by paying down over \$46 billion in debt. That saves taxpayers over \$3 billion annually as an annuity in perpetuity. We have the strongest job creation record in the G-7. We have consistently outperformed the U.S. economy in terms of job creation. We have had stable pricing and low inflation.

Governments do make choices. Our government in 1993 decided that we would put the fiscal house in order. That is what the government set out to do and it is what the government did. This of course never justifies the mismanagement of taxpayers' dollars which has happened from time to time. Our government has resolved itself to deal with those problems.

I am sure because of the actions we have taken in the past we will be able to redeploy resources to national defence. We will be able to better match our resources with the strategic objectives that we have in defence and foreign policy as that review emerges and develops.

The member for Yukon posed a question earlier about the defences in the north. I wonder what the attitude of the residents of his area in the Yukon is toward a missile defence program.

● (2150)

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Chair, I will address the question first and then the comment.

The residents of my area have mixed views on missile defence. I have said that in several speeches on missile defence. Residents of my area have mixed views on a lot of things and I try to represent both sides. Some of the residents do not want any part in joining with missile defence. We are the closest constituency. There are others who see the few land based missiles involved are only a few seconds away. There are people who want to be involved, not to the

extent of making major expenditures, but to make sure we know what is going on so we can have influence and have more effective lobbying to avoid having missiles in space.

In regard to the member's comments on expenditures, I would have to agree. We made other choices. While we were cutting the deficit, we set aside enough money to settle more land claims to bring Canadians on an equal basis, to do a number of environmental cleanups, and for an energy office in my riding. We have constantly increased foreign aid money. We have bought new materials for the military. When I was in Afghanistan the soldiers were happy with their equipment. New vehicles have just arrived.

We have invested in literacy. We have invested in workplace training. We have invested in programs such as Head Start which is for the poorest and youngest of our citizens to get a good start in life and grow up with equal opportunities.

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Chair, I just have to interject because I cannot stand to see the Liberals in their mutual admiration society patting each other on the back at 10 o'clock at night as we wrap up this debate.

I want to point out to Canadians, if any are watching the debate this evening, that contrary to the impression that might have just been left, it was not the Prime Minister as finance minister and it certainly was not the Liberals that ultimately balanced the budget and started paying down the debt. It was the taxpayers of this country.

Before Liberals start bragging too much about their fiscal prowess, they might want to reflect upon the fact that by any measurement, Canadians are the most heavily taxed people in the western world. That continues despite the tax cuts that the Liberals constantly brag about implementing, and I have not yet met a Canadian who has seen the results on their paycheque.

● (2155)

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Chair, the member should talk to more Canadians then because we have made the largest tax cut in history.

In a number of categories, we are actually lower than other countries in the G-7. We have higher taxes in some areas, which is at the choice of Canadians because they think we have better services, such as how we deal with our aboriginal people, health care and education. These are the things that Canadians are proud of.

I do not think any of them begrudge the fact that when Canadians, no matter what their station in life, become sick or injured, as we all do, they will enter a hospital free and receive good attention. Those taxes are well worth the investment.

Hon. Aileen Carroll (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I rise to ask my colleague from Yukon a question. I think his speech at the end of our evening has contributed to an excellent debate from both sides of the House.

Government Orders

As much as we, as a government and a people, must be committed to resolving the crisis and horrors that are now a reality in Haiti, would he agree with me that we, in this government, must find new ways to solve problems that we have not had great success with in the past? If he does agree, perhaps he might make a suggestion in that regard.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Chair, that is quite the question with which to end the debate.

I would like to start by saying that among all the members in the House, there is none I admire more than the one who asked the question of me for her conscientious work in the House.

The new Prime Minister and I agree that new occasions teach new duties. The world has changed. It is a more interconnected world that brings with it its problems and opportunities. We need to look at new multilateral ways, and different groupings of nations and partners to solve these new problems.

That is an exciting course that the government has started on with our Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs on issues of aid and defence, and how to deal with the complex problems that require complex solutions.

The world is looking to Canada with its potential from the diverse cultures that we have in this country. Those answers will come from cultures all around the world. It is a question of how we can work in partnerships to solve problems that are international and complex, and have a variety of components.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Since there are no other members who wish to speak, pursuant to order made Monday, March 8, 2004, the committee will rise and I will leave the chair.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 10 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24 (1).

(The House adjourned at 10:00 p.m.)

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