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Monday, December 6, 2004

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, December 6, 2004

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1100)

[*English*]

VETERANS

Mr. Andy Savoy (Tobique—Mactaquac, Lib.) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should establish a fund to help ensure the maintenance and the preservation of war memorials in communities across Canada in honour of our war veterans.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I proudly rise in the House this morning to introduce a motion that honours Canada's heroes, our war veterans.

The motion calls for the establishment of a special endowment fund. The fund will ensure that Canada's war monuments are maintained as lasting legacies to the brave men and women who served in Canada's armed forces. I believe there is no better way to recognize our veterans than to guarantee there are permanent monuments to their war efforts.

In my opinion, the Government of Canada has a responsibility to provide a portion of the funds needed to repair and restore these memorials. There are about 6,000 war memorials in communities across Canada today. The cost for their upkeep is estimated at a few million dollars a year. That is a small price to pay for the maintenance of monuments to our war veterans. Indeed, what price can we place on this?

I think the debt of gratitude we Canadians owe our war veterans is beyond value. Frequently, while touring my riding of Tobique—Mactaquac, I have the opportunity to meet with different groups, legions and community groups that are in fact charged and responsible for these war monuments and cenotaphs. Inevitably, we talk about the important days in our calendar year. Certainly, for Christians, the holy days are very important and as a patriotic Canadian, Canada Day is very important.

However, of the days that have the most significance, I think Remembrance Day is very important, by virtue of the fact that without the efforts of our soldiers, especially in World War II, we may not have been celebrating these other days. We may not have had that freedom of choice, freedom of speech, and freedom of

religion that makes Canada what it is. In terms of important days on our calendar, I rank Remembrance Day right up there. Without those efforts, we may not be celebrating those other significant days.

In the last century, 116,000 Canadians gave their lives and their future, so that we may live in peace. As long as we continue to pay homage to our troops overseas, their memories will never fade.

The Minister of Veterans Affairs recently declared that 2005 will be known as the Year of the Veteran. Can we think of a more appropriate gift to our veterans than a fund that protects our war memorials?

As the Minister of Veterans Affairs stated when she announced the Year of the Veteran, we can only repay the tremendous debt we owe our veterans through active remembrance. The year 2004 was a special year for our veterans, with ceremonies here and abroad commemorating the Italian campaign during the second world war and the D-Day invasion in Normandy.

The year 2005 will continue to be a year of remembrance for our veterans as Canadians observe the 60th anniversary of the end of the second world war and we mark the Year of the Veteran with a number of commemorative activities.

The timing could not be more fitting for the establishment of an endowment fund to thank our veterans with money for the preservation of Canada's war memorials. These cenotaphs are important symbols of remembrance and appreciation for the sacrifices that have been made for our freedoms.

Without the sacrifices of those who fought for peace and democracy, our nation would not be the great land that it is. Veterans only ask one thing of us, that we remember the sacrifice of those who did not get to come home, did not get to live out their dreams, did not get to enjoy the peace that they fought so hard to win, and did not get the opportunity to do what we have done.

It is important that we remember not only what our veterans did for us, but that we show them publicly that we remain grateful for their service and sacrifice. That is what these memorials in cities, towns and small communities across Canada represent.

Private Members' Business

Today's generation of Canadians knows war only from history books and television news. These memorials serve as constant reminders and as testaments to those who gave their lives for us and those who protect us still.

Our job is to ensure that the stories of Canada's veterans, men and women who served us so nobly in war and ably in peace, are remembered and passed on to our children. We pledge to them to never forget. In a small way, that is what today's motion is all about, a tangible demonstration of our pledge.

We as Canadians have an obligation and a duty to remember how fortunate we are in this country. We must remember that our good fortune is due to the efforts of our men and women in uniform past and present.

All parliamentarians in the House will recall that in the last session we had a very distinguished gentleman who sat in the gallery. One day we recognized him after question period. He was the last surviving Victoria Cross recipient from World War II.

● (1110)

I have a poster from the mid-1990s about 16 Victoria Cross recipients. The poster is entitled "For Valour". The names on the poster are: Sgt Maj John Robert Osborn, Winnipeg; LCol Charles Cecil Ingersoll, Vancouver; Rev. John Weir Foote, Madoc, Ontario; Capt Frederick Thornton Peters, Charlottetown, P.E.I.; Capt David Ernest Hornell, Mimico, Ontario; Sqdn Ldr Ian Willoughby Bazalgette, Calgary, Alberta; Maj David Currie, Sutherland, Saskatchewan; Capt Paul Triquet, Cabano, Quebec; Maj Charles Ferguson Hoey, Duncan, British Columbia; Maj John Keefer Mahoney, New Westminster, British Columbia; Pilot Officer Andrew Charles Mynarski, Winnipeg, Manitoba; Sgt Aubrey Cosens, Latchford, Ontario; Maj Frederick Albert Tilston, Toronto, Ontario; Cpl Frederick George Topham, Toronto, Ontario; Lt Robert Hampton Gray, Trail, British Columbia; and that great gentleman who blessed us with his presence that day, Smokey Smith, Pte Ernest Alvia Smith, New Westminster, British Columbia.

It was a magical day. We stood up as parliamentarians for minutes on end with a standing ovation. There were a lot of lumps in people's throats at the time, recognizing the sacrifice made by Smokey Smith. That day was something that is etched indelibly in my memory as a parliamentarian. It was one of the highlights of my time here on Parliament Hill, a short time of four years.

Another time that really shows how the past and present come together was last May. There was a horrible accident in Afghanistan, where Cpl Jamie Murphy of Newfoundland lost his life. One of the people seated with Cpl Jamie Murphy and injured was Cpl Richard Newman from Hartland, New Brunswick, in my riding of Tobique—Mactaquac.

After Cpl Newman went through rehab, I invited him here to the Hill. I brought him here for lunch and presented him to both the Upper House and our House. Cpl Newman was greeted with a similar standing ovation. It made me think of how the past really means the present, and how in honouring these veterans with war memorials we are really honouring the people of the present who are serving for us in various arenas.

It is a privilege to put forward a motion that pays tribute to the servicemen and servicewomen who laid down their lives for the liberties that we enjoy today. I thank the members for Lac-Saint-Louis, Davenport and Cape Breton—Canso for supporting me on the motion.

I hope that all of my fellow parliamentarians will give favourable consideration to the fund. It is the right thing to do. The legacy of veterans to this wonderful country we call Canada will never ever be forgotten. Lest we forget.

● (1115)

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly enjoyed the member's presentation. I agree with him wholeheartedly that this country has really let our veterans down, on a number of levels, and of course the one the public sees out there is the memorials, cenotaphs and so on.

I am wondering about the timing of this bill. Why now, after a decade of neglect that his government was actually the ringleader of? We saw Wal-Mart step up to the plate and come to bat to raise the money to redo some of the war memorials in Europe. Then of course the government came on side to say, "We will lead the delegation now that the work is done". Why now?

Mr. Andy Savoy: Mr. Speaker, I expected no less than to have someone come forward and play politics with this serious motion. Members should be looking at this motion and focusing on looking forward. I hope that the hon. member will consider supporting this motion. Now is the time to do this. The year of the veteran is coming up in 2005 and I think it is very important that we do this in memory of people like Smokey Smith and all our veterans. Certainly moving forward I think we should focus on the good news of this initiative and work together to make sure this fund comes to fruition.

Mrs. Betty Hinton (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to the motion. Although it is not a new or innovative motion, it does have merit. This issue has been raised in the House before, once by my former colleague, Mrs. Elsie Wayne.

It is refreshing to see what having a minority government can do for this country. The government has designated 2005 the year of the veteran, and rightly so. The men and women of our armed forces have made this country what it is today, a place of freedom and prosperity. There is no doubt that any monument constructed here or abroad in honour of those achievements and sacrifices should be maintained in a dignified manner.

My concern with the member's motion is that it could be interpreted as taking the responsibility of maintenance for war monuments away from those who have historically been responsible for them. For example, in Canada there are nine national memorials that are maintained by the federal government and budgeted for in the federal tax structure. In each province and territory, the capitals have war memorials maintained by the province or territory, the cost of which is built into the provincial tax structure. Most cities and many towns have war memorials maintained by the town or the city and these too are built into the municipal tax structure.

Where this is not the case and a memorial is allowed to crumble or decay, I am certainly in favour of a fund being available to restore it. However, I would certainly want to know why that was allowed to happen. If Canadians are being taxed by three levels of government to maintain war memorials, how could they be allowed to deteriorate to any extent? This question would need to be answered before funding would be made available.

There is another issue that would have to be considered. Is the monument actually used? If not, why not? Is there an alternative? If, for example, a war memorial was built in a town that has lost its population, somewhere where the principal industry has ceased to operate and the population has moved, the fund could be accessed to move the war memorial to an alternative site.

In 2002, two Conservative members of Parliament had similar motions, both of which were dropped from the order paper. I would like to see this go forward. However, I will need to see amendments to reflect the issues I have just raised.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, before I speak to this motion introduced by our Liberal colleague, I want to say that today is a very sad day for Quebec and Canada. On December 6, 1989, 14 young women were killed by a gunman at the École polytechnique de Montréal. He not only completely destroyed the lives of all these families, but he also deeply wounded the hearts of all Quebecers and Canadians.

We often talk about paying tribute to war veterans at dawn and dusk. Accordingly, I want to tell the families that we will always remember these young women who, unfortunately, lost their lives solely because they were women. Quebec reacted with shock and surprise. It is important to honour their memory today. We must never forget these women nor the fact that violence in our society is totally unacceptable.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois and my colleagues, I offer my condolences to the families of these 14 young women.

Second, I want to address the motion before us this morning. Obviously, the Bloc Québécois has nothing against virtue. The aim is to create a fund to preserve war memorials around the world honouring veterans, to ensure, above all, that they are not allowed to fall into ruin. The Bloc Québécois clearly agrees with this point.

Every year, we celebrate November 11, a day when everyone makes a point of remembering the terrible sacrifices that were made. But, it should not be the only day. November 11 represents the apex, the culmination, the ultimate day of remembrance and tribute to these individuals. It is also important to erect monuments on the sites where the great battles were fought, so that the fallen are not forgotten.

A little earlier, the hon. member from the Conservative Party explained a bit about how this operates. Monuments are found in all the provincial capitals, among them Quebec City. Ottawa has a very beautiful one. Other cities and towns, though, are beginning to be have some problems. Not just the municipality is involved; the Royal Canadian Legion is often active, too.

Private Members' Business

I am a member of the Iberville branch of the Royal Canadian Legion and am proud of it. Ms. Côté, our president, will be very pleased to see in *Hansard* that I have mentioned her name. It is unusual for people to see their own names there, but I think it is important, because she is an excellent president. She recognizes the merit of the women veterans as well as the men. We must never forget that.

During the last parliament, a resolution was put before the House asking to the effect that the nurses who accompanied the troops on the front must never be forgotten. Women have participated in the wars, as well; it was not just the men. Women also made their contributions during wartime. They kept the economy running. While the men were away at the front, women worked in the industries supporting the war effort and supplying the front-line troops with what they needed to wage war.

I have, moreover, often accompanied the minister on visits to the cemeteries of Europe. They often present rather a sad sight. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission is the body that is supposed to look after these cemeteries. There is certainly a need for representations on this. It seems to me that this commission must be told if memorials or other things fail to honour appropriately the efforts of our veterans, so that the situation is remedied.

I also want to point out that these memorials, together with November 11 itself, are not dedicated solely to those who lost their lives. People will reply that they are for them first and foremost, which is true. They made the ultimate sacrifice by giving their lives for their country. Others, however, bear physical or psychological scars, and they too must not be forgotten.

The effects of time spent in theatres of operation remain deep within them today. This phenomenon is not restricted to the two world wars and the Korean conflict. It is still the case today. There is more and more evidence of psychological wounds in those returning from today's theatres of operation, post-traumatic stress for one thing. We must not lose sight of that.

● (1120)

Every chance I get, I tell people that my father fought in Holland. In fact, he took part in the liberation of Holland. Whenever I go to the Netherlands I am pleased to tell the Dutch about my father when they take us to see their cemeteries, where the many gravestones reflect all the sacrifices the young soldiers made.

My father was only 20 when he volunteered to go to Holland. He was one of the lucky ones who came back without injury. However, he had friends who did not come home from the front. He also told me he saw some friends being brought back in baskets completely dismembered, without arms or legs. This experience had a tremendous impact on him. Thus, their memory absolutely must be commemorated. They must not be forgotten.

Money must not be an issue. The current government has accumulated a surplus year after year. I think it is important to preserve the memory of these people forever.

Private Members' Business

The amount of money to go into the fund has not been determined yet, but I think if we adopt the principle then it must apply across the board. We must ensure that those who made the ultimate sacrifice are not forgotten.

In conclusion, I mentioned earlier a sort of watchword with respect to the veterans. It is: "At the dawning of the day and at its closing; we will never forget them".

• (1125)

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure, on behalf of the federal New Democratic Party, to rise on this very pertinent motion, which was first introduced in the House a few years ago by a gentleman by the name of John Herron of Fundy Royal. We are very pleased to see my colleague from New Brunswick bring this up once again. Anything we can do to preserve the heritage and memory of those who served our country is an important discussion in the House of Commons at anytime.

I would also like to take a second to remember the 14 women of École Polytechnique who passed away 15 years ago today. As well, I would like to remember the over 2,000 people who were killed in the December 6, 1917 explosion in Halifax harbour. I ask all members of Parliament, senators and all Canadians to take a moment when they go to bed tonight to pray for those of our past.

Speaking of our past, this motion is extremely pertinent. As members know, many of the cenotaphs and memorials, not only within Canada but around the world, require repair. I am pleased to note that Veterans Affairs Canada has allocated money in previous budgets for the Vimy memorial and others, but there is much more to be done. We in the New Democratic Party support establishing a fund, as set out in the motion. We think it is relevant and important. If we do not do it at this time, when will we? We have funds available to preserve our past.

Since 1998, I have been introducing in the House the need for a women's memorial to recognize their service in our wars and to recognize those who stayed at home to look after their families. They also played an important role in the economy during the war efforts to get the machinery out. Winnipeg has a beautiful monument to women's efforts during the wars. We have asked that a particular monument be in every capital in the country to honour the sacrifices of women.

As members know, most of our monuments are dedicated to our men. While we do not have a problem with that, we think it is now time that women are appreciated and recognized for their sacrifices and efforts as well. Many went overseas. Many stayed home and looked after the families. Many stayed home and went into the fields, the factories and fish plants. They kept the economy going by producing the goods and services that our armed forces personnel required.

We think the member from New Brunswick should be congratulated for reintroducing the motion. I honestly cannot see any reason that any member of Parliament, or senator for that matter, would oppose or disagree with the intent of the motion. The amount of money required for this is a possible discussion for the future, but

we need to move forward on this. We need to let the surviving veterans and their families know that their memories will be preserved and remain intact.

Anyone who comes to Ottawa should visit the War Memorial and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, just a few steps from Parliament Hill. We have taken people who have come to visit our offices to see the memorial. There is not a person who I know of who has not been moved by the beauty and the solemn memory for those who served in our past.

I never served in the armed forces. I can only appreciate the sacrifices and the concerns of those men and women did, as well as those who are currently serving. They deserve our utmost gratitude. They are the ones who have the ultimate liability when they sign up to serve their country. We as members of Parliament, especially in the government, we have the ultimate responsibility to ensure that their and their families' needs are met. At the same time, we also have to ensure that our war memorials are preserved and protected as well.

On behalf of the federal New Democratic Party, I would like to congratulate the member from New Brunswick for once again raising this important issue. We fully support it and look for full implementation from the government in the very near future.

• (1130)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to join my other colleagues in paying my respects to the 14 women who were brutally murdered 15 years ago at École Polytechnique. I think what unifies all of us here is a desire to end violence. As today marks that 15th anniversary, we want to bring focus to the problem of violence against women, and urge the government to continue to do all it can to address this problem.

Before I begin my speech, I would like to refer to the Halifax explosion, which the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore mentioned. It underscores a point which our colleague across the way from Saint-Jean raised. During wars not only are those who battle overseas affected, but those who remain in Canada are as well. The Halifax explosion is a graphic and poignant example of how war can touch us even though it is technically taking place overseas.

[*Translation*]

It is an honour for me to rise in this House and it is with great pleasure and pride that I do so today to participate in this debate on Motion M-190, sponsored by my hon. colleague from Tobique—Mactaquac, to establish a fund for the restoration of war monuments here in Canada.

My interest in this issue does not stem only from the fact that a number of veterans and their families live in my riding of Lac-Saint-Louis or that we have in our riding—and I point this out with great pride—the only federal veterans hospital in Canada, namely Sainte-Anne's Hospital, in Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue. In itself, this building is a sort of war monument, with its impressive architecture reminding everyone of the significant role Canada has played over decades in several international conflicts.

While these considerations did influence my decision to take part in today's debate, a greater motivation was the esteem I have for that generation of people who sacrificed themselves, in more ways than one, to defend our freedom and, thus, changed the course of our history, moving it toward freedom, peace and prosperity.

[English]

I was not only motivated to speak today by the wonderful Remembrance Day celebrations that are held in my riding every year, which are extremely well attended and which garner the attention they deserve in the community and in the local media, I also was motivated by the great respect that I hold for the generation that made all manner of sacrifice to protect our freedom and democratic ideals, whether it was through their actual presence overseas or through various duties, military and civilian here in Canada.

It is worth mentioning that the generation that defended freedom in Europe in the second world war also lived through the greatest economic crisis our country and society have known, the Great Depression. One can only imagine what it must have been like to survive the stresses of that bleak economic period only to then be asked to make further sacrifice, to put one's life and career on hold to fight a military enemy.

It is out of profound respect for the members of that generation that I am speaking today, and I dedicate my remarks to them.

War memorials, and in this category I include not only cenotaphs but war cemeteries, such as the Field of Honour Cemetery in Pointe Claire in my riding, have in my view an important dual role to play in our society.

War memorials have an educational role. They are an educational vehicle, albeit a silent one, that can inspire Canada's teachers in many different ways.

Obviously war monuments reminds us of the specific dates of very specific events, events that future generations need to know about. They also force us to think about the related events sometimes that preceded a conflict itself or about the ideas and the ideologies that circulated at the time that may have led the way or prepared the intellectual groundwork for the conflict in question, or at least reinforced that conflict.

War monuments force us to think about economic history, social history and political history, about isolated personal events that have influenced, for good or for bad, the important decisions that leaders made that may have impacted one way or the other on a particular conflict and therefore on the course of history.

There are some who pessimistically contend that we never learn from history, that history fatefully repeats itself in an endless cycle of war, albeit using updated technologies. I do not believe this to be the case.

War memorials are important sign posts of history. They are a part of a system of historical memory and recollection that will, I am sure, now and into the future, perhaps in ways we will not immediately understand, lead us to better political decisions.

Private Members' Business

Creative educators in communities can take inspiration from war memorials in their midst to teach their young students about war and peace.

As I mentioned, my riding houses the Ste. Anne's Veterans Hospital. Again, it is not a war memorial per se and certainly not the kind of structure that is being addressed by the present motion. However, I should mention that this structure was created obviously for a practical purpose but was also motivated by a desire to honour our veterans. It is an imposing architectural structure and is probably the tallest building in my riding and in western Montreal.

I would like to mention the impact that structure has had on one particular educator in my riding and on his students in the community. Professor Bill Tierney is an English professor at John Abbott College located in the town of Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue where the Ste. Anne's Veterans Hospital is also located. I should also mention that Mr. Tierney happens to be the mayor of the town of Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue.

A few years ago he began teaching a course around the novel *All Quiet on the Western Front*. As a part of his English course, he asked his students after reading the book to do volunteer work at the hospital, namely to visit veterans and talk to them about their lives. Magically, some veterans began to talk about the war for the first time. No doubt these students today have had the benefit of great reflection on some of the major events of history and no doubt they are more thoughtful citizens as a result.

I believe that a focus on war memorials across Canada could unleash the same kind of creativity among our educators and the same kind of insight among our young people.

A second role that war memorials have is that they are a place of contemplation for anyone who passes by and takes the time to reflect. War memorials are windows into the historical soul of a nation and of humanity itself. Who has not stopped in front of a cenotaph to reflect on the misery of war, the misery of the trenches, the mud, the mustard gas, the pain, the loneliness and the suffering? Who has not walked away with the silent conviction that war is not the answer or that tyranny and the conflict that it creates is an unmitigated evil?

In preparing for my remarks today, I took it upon myself to read the latest novel by one of our great Canadian novelists, Jane Urquhart, entitled *The Stone Carvers*, a fictional work based loosely on the life of Toronto sculptor Walter Allward's Vimy Memorial in Vimy, France.

While I realize that the fund we are speaking about today is for war memorials in Canada only, I think a reference is warranted. I quote from the novel:

Allward took all of this in...the now distant pain of bereavement and lost youth... this huge white structure meant to be a memorial to grief, on the one hand, and a prayer for peace on the other.

● (1135)

I believe that all war memorials in Canada serve that kind of purpose.

Private Members' Business

This kind of contemplation, this kind of knowledge of history that war memorials give us, creates and nurtures a sense of duty in all of us, a sense that we must give, however modestly, back to our society, that we must make some effort from time to time to make this country a better place.

At a very basic but vital level for our democracy, I doubt that anyone who has had a chance to reflect seriously on the sacrifices our veterans made would want to forgo his or her right to vote. I believe that such a reflection can only reinforce one's sense of duty in that respect.

I would like to mention one of my constituents, a gentleman by the name of Robert Rushbrook, who fought, like the father of the hon. member from Saint-Jean, in the liberation of Holland. He told me the other day that the school children of Holland make a point every year of maintaining and taking care of the Canadian war cemetery in Holland and of the Commonwealth cemetery.

If school children across the ocean can pay that kind of respect to those Canadians who fell in battle liberating them at the end of the second world war, then it is incumbent upon us to make the funds available to pay the same kind of homage here in Canada to our veterans and to those who fell in battle.

• (1140)

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join in the debate on this worthy motion. This is not the first time that memorial maintenance has been discussed in this place. If I recall correctly, similar private member's bills have been put forward in the past by my colleagues opposite. This time it is my friend from this side of the aisle, all of which is to say that when it comes to remembrance and commemoration, our debate is almost entirely non-partisan. Usually our disagreements are over matters of details, not intent.

[Translation]

This is, by definition, a worthwhile and interesting motion, and I weigh my words carefully.

[English]

I say it is worthwhile because all of us in this place feel the motion is appropriate for all the reasons that our intellect tells us. We are wise to heed the words of philosopher, Santayana, who said, "Those who do not know their history are condemned to relive it".

We know that if we forget the stories of veterans we will lose our sense of place in history. We will be breaking the faith with Canadians who served and sacrificed for others and with the families they left behind.

Part of that storytelling surely lies in the memorials that can be found in most communities throughout Canada.

[Translation]

I also say it is an interesting motion, because I believe that it raises valid questions about the nature of commemoration and the best way to invest public money.

In fact, my hon. colleague referred to some of these issues in his remarks.

[English]

• (1145)

I should point out that it is not as if the government does not spend substantial money now for physical icons and markers of remembrance. Hon. members are quite familiar with the fact that the government is responsible for the maintenance of our glorious national war memorials. If ever anyone wants proof of money well spent, they only need to watch the reaction of our visitors to the amazing Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

It is clear that monuments and cenotaphs can have the power to move and motivate people to stop and think about the legacy they have inherited from those who were caught up in the maelstrom of war and destruction. Because Canadians' wartime sacrifice has been on foreign shores and because the monuments that arose from the ashes of the first world war are now disintegrating before our eyes, our duty is clear. We must meet our responsibility in the care and maintenance of the 13 great war memorials in France and Belgium.

Anyone who has seen the monument of Vimy Ridge, even if only in picture books, can see the reason. To not see the magnificent monument or any of the others would be unthinkable. That is why we are in the midst of a \$30 million refurbishing to bring these wonderful witnesses to Canadians' sacrifices back to their original condition.

[Translation]

On the home front, there are 6,000 cenotaphs and monuments in municipalities across the country, some of which are in need of preservation and restoration. I know that the veterans are very pleased that the necessary maintenance of these cenotaphs and monuments is among the government's priorities. I also know that more remains to be done, but I think that, through this fund, it will be possible to put together the initial financial resources necessary to cooperate with individuals and community groups in restoring cenotaphs and monuments.

[English]

I congratulate the hon. members on the motion and the government for making a positive response. A collective pat on the back is due to all who continue to pursue this matter to its fruition.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to join in this debate on Motion No. 190.

As has been mentioned by previous speakers, this topic has been brought to the floor of the House on a number of past occasions. I think there is a shared recognition in the House that it is important and significant that we continue to honour the memories of those who served. Certainly, the motion goes a long way in doing so. It reaffirms that the great privileges we have as Canadians were earned and fought for by veterans. It is important that we continue to recognize their contribution.

Private Members' Business

The motion, as it is presented, leaves us some latitude as to how the program would be delivered. It was raised by my colleague from the Conservative Party earlier that in no way does the federal government expect or anticipate that the responsibility for cenotaphs across this country would fall back into federal jurisdiction and responsibility. We should continue to work with stakeholders in community groups on these projects.

Two years ago, in one of my communities, the former town of Louisburg, there was a fairly significant fundraising project that was driven by a couple of members of the local legion from Louisburg. They went out to the business community and private donors, raised a considerable amount of money, put together a cenotaph, and developed a park area around it that was very much embraced by the community.

The people of Louisburg and the broader areas certainly understood the importance of developing this space. It is a beautiful and important addition to the downtown area. People visit it on a regular basis and certainly did during the Remembrance Day ceremonies on November 11. It is an inspirational place to gather and to pay homage to those who served and did not return.

I think that is where we are heading with this particular motion. It is an opportunity for the federal government to play a role in important projects similar to the one in Louisburg. I have one on my desk. There is a community group in the Arichat area that are looking at doing a similar type project. It is not always easy to find some kind of assistance and support for those community based projects. Hopefully through this motion, we can develop the necessary supports so that we can go forward, and help these people and community groups as they try to do such important work.

I know the minister herself is very committed. She has recognized that this type of initiative is important. Past ministers have as well, but the contentious aspect of it has always been where we find the money. As stewards of the public purse and taxpayers' dollars, there are always incredible demands. One can imagine that for every tax dollar in Ottawa, there are probably 200 very worthy, noble and important places that this dollar could be placed.

Past ministers within veterans affairs have recognized that this would be a very appropriate and beneficial program to enter into, but the difficulty was making the dollars available. We hope that through this motion the minister will recognize that the House supports such an initiative and allow it to go forward.

I do not think the intent of the motion from my colleague from Tobique—Mactaquac is to draw up criteria, parameters or whatever. It is certainly not in the interests of the House of Commons, the government or the members on the government side to actually develop specific criteria. We know that through interventions with stakeholders, legion members and community groups that veterans affairs would hopefully be able to develop criteria so that decisions could be made on which projects would get funding and which would not. Some might go through one year and others in subsequent years. We would hope that veterans affairs would engage with the various stakeholders to develop the necessary criteria. From there the stakeholders could make application and hopefully receive some type of assistance from the fund.

●(1150)

We might ask ourselves a philosophical question as we discuss the motion today. How is commemoration and remembrance best fostered and encouraged? There is an argument to be made that when individuals band together on a volunteer basis to raise funds for a commemorative project, it takes on a personal meaning for which participants take firsthand pride. I mentioned in my opening comments the group in Louisbourg and Arichat that have shown this initiative. It is only proper that the federal government stand beside them so that we honour the memories of these veterans.

I acknowledge the fact that there are no easy or absolutely correct answers to these questions, and we do not need answers today. I join my colleagues who have addressed the motion today in agreeing with it. It is a good idea to devote some funding to the repair and preservation of monuments. Remembering and honouring those who have proudly served our country in war and in peace is crucial for all Canadians in preserving the legacy of our veterans. Our objective with the motion is to help in that preservation. In agreeing with Motion No. 190, we are taking one more step along the commemorative road and that surely is a good thing.

I would like to personally thank the member for Tobique—Mactaquac. The motion has a great deal of merit. He has done a good thing in bringing this issue to light today. I will be supporting the motion.

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just arrived from Toronto, leaving a snowstorm there, and coming into the House I was taken by the speech and the address from our colleague from Tobique—Mactaquac.

The subject matter is of absolute profound interest to all members of this House. My riding of York South—Weston is an old riding that formerly consisted of one of the oldest townships in Canada, York Township. It preceded all of the townships before the formation of the city of Toronto and its associated suburbs. In the first and second world war the old York Township had one of the highest levels of voluntary involvement in our armed services. In fact, each Remembrance Day, as the mayor and my father as the reeve before me, we participated in the Remembrance Day services of many army and navy associations, veterans associations, and legions.

I remember attending Remembrance Day ceremonies with my father in the early 1950s when attendance was in the thousands. In fact, over the years we have seen the reduced presence of those veterans as a result of the number of veterans who have passed away or are unable to participate. In a graphic way, we have witnessed what they can give us and the role they have played in our lives. We remember what they stood for in terms of freedom, in terms of the values, and in terms of what we as Canadians see as our heritage and our responsibility as a result of their service in the affairs of the world. It is also in terms of those that are vulnerable to the loss of democracy, in particular in developing nations, that are susceptible and being confronted with the loss, in a very inhumane way, of their most basic rights of food and comfort.

Private Members' Business

I say that as a preamble to my observation that in these last few weeks there have been two things that have drawn me into this issue. One is the possibility that the symbols of our Victoria Cross winners, and the member referred to those Victoria Cross winners, would be lost; that the symbols of their bravery and heroism, and what they stood for and died for would be lost to future generations.

In my area the Victoria Cross of Corporal Fred Topham, who was a medic in the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion, was put up for auction to the highest bidder. It appeared that the Victoria Cross would be bought up by a foreign interest and would possibly be ensconced in a private collection.

What a tragedy and what a statement. The inability of Canadians, in some way, to rally around that Victoria Cross and the heroic sacrifice of Corporal Fred Topham and to allow that symbol of everything we purport to believe in to be lost to the present and future generations. It is the ultimate demonstration of what our freedoms really are all about. It is scandalous.

In response to that particular issue, the members of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion and veterans organizations throughout my community and other communities, along with students and teachers, involved themselves in the preparation of a program that would raise the money to purchase the Corporal Fred Topham Victoria Cross in order that it would not be lost as a symbol of his sacrifice and the sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of Canadian young men and women.

● (1155)

At a very late date the government recognized that there was a role for the government to play in that situation. The Minister of Canadian Heritage announced that there would be participation from a government position and I know that position was supported by all parties on both sides of this House.

Let me give the second example of how in a very profound way we can lose our heritage with respect to the kinds of issues that are raised in this motion. As the mayor of a former municipality, I was able to reflect back on many of the legions and their sites that they had looked after for many decades.

We all know that across the country there are amalgamations and consolidations of municipalities, and some of the things that are very sacred fall through the cracks, such as our heritage sites and the preservation of war memorials. In my area, there was a little war memorial that had been maintained by the town of Weston in Little Avenue Memorial Park. Every year, the students and the town fathers, along with the community and the veterans' associations, would go up to Little Park and have their Remembrance Day programs. As I have indicated, over the years and the decades fewer people have been going to the park to the extent that the war memorial, after the town of Weston became part of the borough of York, was maintained by the borough of York as part of a broader number of war memorials.

As time went on, some of those war memorials were forgotten or were not maintained to the extent that they should have been as the number of veterans in the veterans' associations in fact themselves diminished in numbers. The result was that when the Town of Weston merged with the borough of York and the borough of York

then merged with the City of Toronto, this huge city then had to maintain all of the war memorials against all the circumstances I have outlined.

That one little war memorial, sacred to the memory of the young men and women who names were inscribed in all the churches in Weston, who came from families who have long since gone but whose names we look at and reflect on in church, fell into disrepair.

To the credit of the community and the City of Toronto, there has been a renaissance and a rekindling of interest in these war memorials. Thank God for that. Now, the war memorial in Little Park, with the old sword ingrained in the limestone, is being refurbished in a manner and to a state that we as Canadians and the people of Weston and the people of Toronto should expect would be the manner in which we would maintain that war memorial.

These are not hollow symbols. These war memorials across this country in little parks, hamlets, villages, towns and large cities are absolutely fundamental in their symbolism of what we have received as the heritage and legacy from the sacrifice of those young men and women. They are not to be treated lightly.

I was so pleased that the member for Tobique—Mactaquac was speaking on this subject. I was very interested in hearing the concerns raised by others on both sides of this House. I think Canadians will feel that we have now come around to once again being sensitized to how important this legacy is.

I ask members to think of how many times we have heard these words:

They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

This motion is an affirmation of everything in that exhortation. I know that all members will support the spirit and the substance of this motion.

● (1200)

● (1205)

Mr. Gerry Ritz: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In light of the cooperation that the last member just spoke of, I would certainly agree, and I think if you sought it you would find unanimous consent that this bill be passed at all stages today and moved along, that the question be put, the vote taken and deemed done, because of 2005 being the year of the veteran and so on. This would be a great way to kick-start that. I know all members would give unanimous consent to that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): May I remind the hon. member that we are dealing not with a private bill but with a motion.

Does the hon. member have unanimous consent of the House to present the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: No.

Government Orders

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): The hour provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA EDUCATION SAVINGS ACT

The House resumed from December 3 consideration of the motion that Bill C-5, an act to provide financial assistance for post-secondary education savings, be read the third time and passed.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity today to participate in the debate on third reading of Bill C-5, an act to provide financial assistance for post-secondary education savings.

A weekend has passed since several of my colleagues had an opportunity to very ably address the bill in debate on Friday and I want to say how appreciative I am of their contribution to that debate. Perhaps we need to take just a moment to remind ourselves that Bill C-5 is an act to provide financial assistance for post-secondary education savings, the stated purpose of which is to encourage the financing of children's post-secondary education through saving from early childhood in registered education savings plans.

On the face of it, one might ask how anybody could not be in favour of people setting aside savings for the future education of their young people if they are in a position to do so. Nobody in their right mind could be opposed to that.

The difficulty with the bill and the reason why the New Democratic Party will not vote in support of the bill is that it is fundamentally flawed.

It is fundamentally flawed because it takes the approach that what is really needed in order to make sure that young people can access our post-secondary education system is just for their families to act more responsibly and, in order to get them to act more responsibly, the government needs to put some money out front, a small number of dollars, a token in terms of the actual cost of post-secondary education, and then families will act more responsibly.

They will learn from this because it is an important symbol. The government is saying that post-secondary education is so important that it is prepared to put some money into people's pockets to take out a registered education savings plan and that will take care of the educational needs of their children in the future.

This is a false signal, because of course the real problem with post-secondary education is that for yesterday's students, they are now crippled with debt. For today's students, their educational quality of experience is being eroded because they are so desperately trying to work at part time and underpaid jobs, which robs them of attending classes and getting assignments done and so on to pay for

the privilege of being there, or they are having to drop out because the debt load has become so great that they simply cannot carry on.

Even for tomorrow's students the problem is not solved with the bill that is before us, because tuition is going up and up, the government has massively eroded its commitment of dollars to post-secondary education, and students simply are not able to get into the system in the first place in many cases.

Why? Because the government's commitment—and not the commitment of low income families who are supposed to be the target of the bill and who are supposed to be able to solve the problem by pulling savings out of their pockets—to post-secondary education is woefully inadequate. It represents doublespeak by the government. It is constantly reminding young people of the importance of post-secondary education to their future, which of course is absolutely true, but then the government acts so irresponsibly that it makes that post-secondary education virtually inaccessible for large numbers of students.

I know it is a subject for another day and it is certainly a subject when it comes to the budgetary priorities of the government as we go into the next budget, but the reality is that the government has so massively and unilaterally withdrawn dollars from post-secondary education that we have sent exactly the wrong signal to all Canadians about whether it is really important or not.

The result is that we have students faced with crippling debts. As an outstanding student leader in my own riding said during a debate in the recent election, what used to be a student crisis has now become a family crisis for a great many people in this country, especially low and modest income families, and I want to say especially families that live in the least prosperous areas, because it becomes part of an out-migration policy of our youth.

I know that one of our elected members from Cape Breton absolutely understands this: that not having adequate funding for post-secondary education at the public level becomes a deportation policy from rural areas, from remote areas and certainly from Cape Breton. I have to say that one of the most eloquent presentations before the human resources committee on this bill came from the spokespersons for and the representatives of the students at Cape Breton college, the University College of Cape Breton. I apologize for tripping over that name; unbelievably, I understand that UCCB is in the process of stripping "Cape Breton" out of the name. But that is another topic.

● (1210)

I want to get to what it is about the bill that is so absolutely flawed, and it borders on the immoral. The rhetoric, the flourish around the bill is it is about helping low income students first and foremost. This is simply a number's crunch that will lead to the conclusion shared with the committee, and particularly by an outstanding Quebec economist who gave us the numbers, that this is a bogus bill because the principal beneficiaries of it would be those earning over \$70,000 a year.

Government Orders

It is no good for government members to get up as they have and say that is not the intention of the bill. They say that the intention of the bill is to help those in the lowest income category. If that is its intention, it does not live up to its billing. It does not deliver on its intentions. In that sense, it is fundamentally flawed, dishonest and it is immoral. Bill C-5 purports to do one thing, but it would do something different from that.

Students, from low income and modest income families across the country, who did their homework on the legislation, non-governmental agencies and community-based groups, whose resources and expertise are primarily allocated to helping low income families deal with the challenges they face to get into post-secondary educational institutions, came before the committee. With two exceptions only, every one of them said that the bill should be scrapped.

The reason given by those who spoke from the other three parties in support of the bill is that it would be better than nothing. Why? It is either the bogus claim that it will benefit low income families, which it will not, or in some ways worse still, it shows an impoverished state of mind and a lack of understanding of the problem.

I will not name any members when I say this, but I find it repugnant that several members said to me that they agreed with my analysis of the bill and that they had listened to all the witnesses who appeared before the committee who had said the bill should be scrapped. However, they admitted that they would not look good if it appeared they would not support giving money to low income people. I call that a lack of principle as well as a lack of leadership.

The voices that have expressed themselves in opposition to the bill and that have said to scrap it include, the Canadian Federation of Students, the Canadian Association of University Teachers, the Canadian Council on Social Development, the National Anti-Poverty Organization, the National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of Canada and Low Income Families Together. The most stunning thing of all is the fact that the Bloc would support Bill C-5 in defiance of the eloquent, informed pleadings of la Fédération étudiante Universitaire du Québec, a group of highly informed students who represent the whole student body in the province of Quebec. These students also told us to scrap the bill because they felt it was offensive.

Another group from Quebec that also told the committee to scrap the bill was the Fédération des associations de familles monoparentales et recomposées du Québec, or in other words, the federation of single parent and blended family association.

The economist about whom I spoke briefly, André Lareau, a highly respected professor at Laval University, made it clear in his detailed analysis that the chief beneficiaries of Bill C-5 would be the highest income earners in Canada, not the lowest income earners.

•(1215)

Let me make one more plea. It is never too late to change one's mind. There is nothing weak-kneed or feeble-minded about changing one's mind in the face of the facts and the voices that came forward and who pleaded to scrap this bill. There is nothing wrong with changing one's mind in the face of the evidence.

This is what Ian Boyko of the Canadian Federation of Students said:

To begin with, we believe the learning bond will not get anywhere close to the heart of the problem. Just speaking in purely financial terms, the amount of money that low-income Canadians may accumulate under the learning bond will be wholly inadequate to cope with the rapidly increasing costs of colleges and universities in most jurisdictions. Until spiralling tuition fees are brought under control, the federal government is just throwing good money after bad money in student financial aid.

Let us remember that the majority of the OECD countries have tuition free post-secondary education. In addition to tuition free post-secondary education, there are a good many countries that are far less prosperous than Canada that also provide considerable financial support in terms of living costs and helping to cover related costs to post-secondary education.

This is what the national director of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations said, apparently falling completely on deaf ears in the House of Commons, except for the New Democratic Party caucus. He said:

The greatest problem of learning bonds, however, is that they place heavy expectations on low-income families that simply do not have the resources to contribute significant amounts annually to an RESP for each of their children. Even if families are completely aware of the benefits of saving for education, low-income Canadians cannot afford to save the necessary funds to pay for education funds while still putting food on the table. As we've said before, it's like giving a low-income family \$500 and a Mercedes-Benz and expecting them to finance the rest of the car.

Finally, I want to quote from the very powerful testimony of the representative from the University College of Cape Breton. Jamie Crane is a woman leader at UCCB. She said:

Low-income families, even if they did have the time to invest in registered savings plans, would not be able to contribute huge sums each year. Add that to the small amount of \$2,000 that the government would contribute in the Canada Learning Bond and we're not looking at an amount that would even allow a child of a low-income family, or even a middle-income family, for that matter, to get their foot in the door, considering the rate at which we know tuition is estimated to rise over the next 10 to 20 years.

One really ugly charge has been made about the student leaders in the country today, which includes the Canadian Federation of Students, CASA and the Quebec federation of students to which I have referred, Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec. That charge has been made by some of those who support the bill, but criticize the student leadership. They have said that they only care about themselves, that only care that they are facing crippling debts and that they are not willing to let the government introduce a bill that will, and let us be clear about this, only begin to benefit a student for the first time 18 years from now.

That completely ignores the fact that all the other education stakeholders who have spoken, who very much have a long term investment and interest in the post-secondary education system, have also condemned this bill as ill-conceived, inadequate and a false signal to Canadians that what needs to be done about the financing of post-secondary education is actually accomplished by this bill.

•(1220)

Furthermore, as I have already said, every one of the community-based organizations, the NGOs, the non-profits, the research bodies, whose sole focus is on the question of how to help give low and modest income families a leg up in meeting the challenges that they face in this world, have also condemned the legislation as flawed, inadequate and not supportable.

Government Orders

At the end of the day, I hope it is never too late to say to people that we are supposedly in a minority Parliament that is more receptive, not less receptive, and more responsive to hearing the voices of Canadians. We have heard overwhelmingly voices that have informed themselves on the bill. They have analyzed and experienced this. They have lived and breathed every day the challenges that students and their families of yesterday, today and tomorrow have faced and that their community have faced in trying to support them. They have all said to scrap this legislation. This is supposed to be a Parliament that is renewing democracy. How is it a signal that the democratic process is alive and well and more responsive today when just about every witness and those who have commented outside of the hearings before the human resources committee have said that the bill should not be supported?

The voices that have said to scrap this bill have not done so because they are unaware of what is needed for low income families to support their young people to get an education. The single parent and blended family association from Quebec is stunned that it does not have the support of the Bloc in its position. It has said that since access to quality education is one of the surest ways to fight poverty, it should be one of the federal government's priorities, coming well before tax benefits for the more affluent. However, the bill effectively is about a tax benefit primarily for the most affluent. Not that this is the intention. I see the impatience of some members, wondering how I can say that. I can say it because that is the fact of it. That is what the figures clearly indicate.

We know there are a great many low income families who are struggling now to figure out how to pay for their groceries and rent and at the same time have money left over to help pay for school supplies and equipment of their elementary, junior and senior high sons and daughters. They are trying to help support them through the education system.

I again implore members not to close their ears to the voices that have been speaking out and pleading with us to address the real problems with respect to access and crippling education debt for today's and tomorrow's post-secondary students.

•(1225)

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity, now that we have the subject of post-secondary education before the House of Commons, to raise what I believe to be a critical issue with respect to the rising costs our young people face as they study in post-secondary institutions.

As the youngest member of Parliament in Canada, I am probably the most recent student of our university system. One of the greatest costs that we experience when we are students is actually a cost that many people do not know about at all. It is the cost of buying new textbooks year after year. Some students spend as much as \$1,500 a year on textbooks. That is three, four or even five months' rent, depending on where the student finds housing.

I want to know what kind of a solution the hon. member has for reducing the cost of textbooks? In this particular context though, many of these books could easily be reused year after year through used book stores which many student associations have set up.

However, the publishers, along with the professors, have set in place a policy requiring students to buy new textbooks every single

year. As a result, as students move from year one to year two, they cannot even sell the books that are now obsolete to them because a new edition is now required. This costs probably millions of dollars to students right across the country.

I am wondering if there is some sort of a solution that the hon. member across the way can propose to deal with this problem.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Mr. Speaker, I think the cost of books is a huge issue and a huge burden. I appreciate the member raising the question.

However I must say that I find it surprising and I would welcome the member sharing the evidence that professors across the board in every university community are requiring students to buy new textbooks every year. I have to say that has not been my experience. I am not saying that there might not be some instances where a new textbook or perhaps a new version of a textbook is introduced and that students are being requested to buy the new book.

I am very proud and privileged to represent, I believe, a riding that has the highest number of post-secondary education institutions in the country. If other members want contest that and say that they are number one, that is fair enough. My riding of Halifax has seven universities and colleges.

I know for a fact that a great many students buy second-hand books. What is a particular nightmare is that many students cannot afford to buy books at all. A lot of students borrow and try to scrimp with notes and all the rest of it.

I would respectfully say to the hon. member, in answer to his question, that if those are the kinds of concerns he has he certainly should not be supporting this bill. This bill does absolutely nothing to deal with the nightmare for students and low income families who cannot begin to pay for the tuition, let alone the books, the lab equipment and whatever other requirements there are to support their educational experience.

I would be the first to support an initiative that would speak out loudly and address this very problem of books that may be required to be purchased new, when they should be, and in many instances are, available as second-hand books.

At the end of the day it is not getting at the fundamental issue, which is the inadequate funding of post-secondary education for our students of today and tomorrow, let alone 18 years from now, despite the stated intentions of the bill that we have before us that is so fundamentally flawed and should be scrapped. I hope the member will be voting against the bill given his concerns.

•(1230)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have difficulty understanding the position of the NDP and even more understanding the attack on us earlier by the hon. member.

Government Orders

I have difficulty understanding people's inability to see the need to fight a number of battles. Yes, the transfer payments for education need to be increased. We must also ensure that educational institutions have sufficient funds to purchase books and other supplies. We must ensure that families receive more money. However, when we have to fight for one of the measures that could ultimately encourage children of lower-income families to continue their post-secondary education, I fail to understand.

We must fight a number of battles. This is not the only one. At the very least, when an initiative is introduced to improve the future of the children from the most disadvantaged families, the NDP must not be opposed. The Liberals have become more socialist than the NDP. There comes a time when we have to get our priorities straight and we must not spit on an initiative by saying that it is only in 18 years.

Consider children who are two or three years old today with no future in terms of education. If we allow their families to hope that, in some respects, they could take advantage of such a plan, we should not spit on that hope. However, we must fight at the same time to improve the standard of living and cut taxes, for example for lower-income families, the highest percentage in the lower income tax brackets of all the G-7 countries.

This is the kind of thing we need to do. Clearly, federal transfer payments need to be increased, but we must not spit on something that could benefit lower-income families.

[*English*]

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Mr. Speaker, I will try to answer the member's question in two ways. First he says that if we were to add a room on to a house would that not be improving it. It could. However what is happening with our university infrastructure is that the foundation is crumbling and the walls are caving in. The libraries and laboratories in our universities are in trouble because of the lack of investment. The walls are falling down and the roofs are leaking.

Would this be the wisest investment? Yes, we could add a room but is it the wisest investment to add a room when the educational infrastructure is in such desperate shape?

My second comment may be perhaps more persuasive for the member. I probably will not do justice to André Lareau from Laval University when I quote him, but I want to remind the member of what this Quebec expert said on Bill C-5 in pleading for it to be set aside. He said:

However, one of the objectives of the tax system is to distribute wealth fairly. How can we justify a government financial assistance program that targets the well-off members of society?

To summarize, richer families are the big winners in the income splitting that results from the education savings plan. Furthermore, they benefit from these amounts because their children are less likely to have to work. We have a double impact that benefits upper income families.

I would not have thought that would be the position of the Bloc. I say, with no reservation and no hesitation, that one of the reasons that it is so shocking to see the Bloc supporting this flawed bill is that in the province of Quebec, under both Liberal and Péquiste governments, there has been an understanding of the comprehensive approach that is needed. In fact, we have the asymmetrical

educational measures taken in Quebec, an approach that goes in the opposite direction to this one.

I hear in this member's question the same thing I am hearing, and dismays people so much, is that is it not better to do something than to do nothing. It is not better if the choice we are making of the something is the wrong choice, that there are other things that are more important in both the short term and the long term and certainly in the medium term to which the educational dollars ought to be directed.

I make that plea again, particularly for the Bloc members because I think Quebec, I do not want to go over the top here, has closer to a model of what is needed in the rest of the country. The only thing that has interfered with Quebec governments, the previous Péquiste government and the current Liberal government, from doing an even better job on supporting the educational needs of students, particularly access to post-secondary education, is the fact that the federal government still has not even replaced the massive unilateral cuts that it introduced, starting with the so-called 1995 budget.

I do not know why the Bloc would be voting for this bill.

• (1235)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): The vote is deferred to 3 p.m. tomorrow.

Government Orders

[Translation]

TLICHO LAND CLAIMS AND SELF-GOVERNMENT ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-14, an act to give effect to a land claims and self-government agreement among the Tlicho, the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Government of Canada, to make related amendments to the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development) moved that the bill be concurred in at report stage.

(Motion agreed to)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): When shall the bill be read the third time? With the consent of the House, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

• (1240)

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development) moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

[English]

Hon. Ethel Blondin-Andrew (Minister of State (Northern Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is indeed a historic day for Canada, the Tlicho and the House. Today it is our solemn duty to consider the merits of Bill C-14 as we enter the final debate in the House on the Tlicho agreement. I am convinced that a close examination of the proposed legislation will reveal its numerous advantages for the Tlicho, for the north and for Canada.

I wish to thank the members of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development for their support and valuable insight, as the bill has worked its way through the House rather expeditiously. The legislation is a testament of what we can achieve together when we work in partnership.

On that note, I would also like to acknowledge the tireless efforts of all those who have been working with such unwavering determination to see the bill become a reality. We are honoured to have with us today the Tlicho leadership, elders, and members of the community who have worked so hard.

We have the Tlicho chiefs from all the Tlicho communities in the House today: Grand Chief Joe Rabesca, Chief Charlie Jim Nitsiza from Whati and his wife, Chief Archie Wettrade from Gameti and his spouse as well, Chief Joseph Judas from Wekweti and Chief Clifford Daniels from Behchoko. All these people have their spouses with them.

The Elders Advisory Council has also travelled to Ottawa for this historic day, represented by Alexi Arrowmaker, Jimmy B. Rabesca, Joe Migwi and Harry Simpson. The Tlicho negotiators are here as well. They are John B. Zoe, Ted Blondin, Eddie Erasmus and James Wahshie. The legal counsel are Colin Salter and Bertha Rabesca-Zoe.

This is a delegation that deserves to be here and to see the benefits of their really hard work over the years and decades. A delegation of people whose support was crucial in getting to this point includes

Violet Camsell-Blondin, Frances Erasmus, Georgina Franki and James Rabesca. All of these people demonstrated selfless dedication and perseverance in making the agreement possible. They spent a lot of time on the road away from their families and communities making. They did not consider it to be a sacrifice but rather a dedication in seeing a future for their people.

For more than 10 years the Tlicho, the governments of Canada and the Northwest Territories have worked toward this agreement. The legislation before us today is a response to changing circumstances and challenging conditions. It represents nothing less than the inspiration of a proud and determined people committed to flourish in today's north and in Canada.

The enactment of Bill C-14, and the agreement that it enshrines, will not only foster greater economic and social development in the Tlicho communities, it will also allow us, as a country, to build on the great progress we have made in resolving aboriginal issues.

After all, this is one of the most prosperous and successful aboriginal communities in the north. The agreement defines and delineates Tlicho rights with respect to lands, resources and self-government. Indeed, many observers have stated publicly that the clarification of Tlicho rights may well be the single most advantageous aspect of the agreement.

This clarity will lead to substantial benefits for the Tlicho and for all Canadians. It was a truly visionary and forward thinking move that back in the 1960s, Tlicho leaders began a comprehensive process of consultation and negotiation upon recognizing the need to protect their traditional way of life and seeing the opportunity to benefit from modern enterprise.

Their objective, as captured by Chief Jimmy Bruneau, was to become strong like two people, to blend traditional beliefs with modern practices. During the past 10 years, the Tlicho people have realized Chief Bruneau's vision. They have moved decisively to protect their past and secure their future by following an approach based on traditional, and modern beliefs and practices.

After 16 years of being in the House, I am not prone to being nervous, but I am quite nervous today. I am a little intimidated because these are very powerful people and very powerful leaders from my riding. This is such an important piece of legislation that I am afraid to make a mistake.

To ensure the survival of their culture, the Tlicho people drafted and ratified a constitution that honours their language and customs. It is important to note that the Tlicho constitution states clearly that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms applies to the Tlicho government thereby protecting the democratic rights and freedoms of those who reside on Tlicho lands. Non-Tlicho citizens, for instance, may be appointed or elected to serve in Tlicho institutions.

• (1245)

To foster economic and social prosperity, the Tlicho negotiated mutually beneficial agreements with private companies and public sector organizations. To facilitate greater cooperation with neighbouring aboriginal groups, the Tlicho finalized overlap agreements that have clarified land boundaries.

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The fact that the Tlicho people are one of the most progressive aboriginal groups in Canada is linked to their consultative and collaborative abilities, their careful consideration of every voice, and their willingness to accept dissent yet still achieve consensus. I have personally watched the consultation process that they used in bringing all of their people along every step of the way. The way in which they engaged the elders to be informed and all of their citizens to be part of this was really quite an extraordinary piece of work in and of itself.

Enacting this piece of legislation could not be more timely because of the readiness of the Tlicho people to advance to true and complete self-government. The Tlicho people have amply demonstrated their ability to exercise the powers granted under Bill C-14 wisely. After all, the Tlicho have established and maintained a series of successful partnerships to deliver social services, develop economic opportunities, and build community infrastructure.

The Tlicho were the first aboriginal group in Canada to establish an independent school board, and today operate five schools with a high school graduation rate that has far exceeded expectations from just a decade ago.

Today they also run a seniors residence, and this residence is magic. It is a wonderful accommodation of what people need in terms of modern medical needs and care, and also traditional needs. They also have a day care centre and a prenatal program.

The Tlicho have collaborated on projects to improve physical infrastructure in the north. In addition to building and maintaining their own airport, the Tlicho people, in collaboration with the Northwest Territories Power Corporation, established a run-of-the-river hydro generating station on the Snare River-Snare Cascades. Today the station generates approximately 7% of the region's electrical capacity.

The Tlicho people are involved in numerous ventures across a range of economic sectors such as tourism and mining. They secured impact benefit agreements with two diamond mining companies, Diavik and BHP Billiton. These agreements deliver significant benefits such as employment and contracting opportunities, along with training and scholarship programs.

To maximize the potential long term benefits of the diamond mines, the Tlicho partnered with ATCO Frontec to create Tlicho Logistics. This giant company supplies support services to mining projects and ensures that Tlicho employees receive on the job training in effective management and administration practices. With these skills, the Tlicho are more likely to succeed on future projects.

This focus on economic development has not diminished the Tlicho's strong connection to heritage. The trails of our ancestors program is but one small example. This annual 10 day canoe trip, led by Tlicho elders and leaders, enables up to 200 community members of all ages to fish, hunt, paddle, and camp together on traditional waterways and lands. The trip celebrates the spiritual bond with the land that has long been a central feature of Tlicho culture.

To guarantee that future generations can also connect with their traditional lands, the Tlicho people negotiated the agreement at the heart of Bill C-14. Under the agreement, the Tlicho will acquire approximately 39,000 square kilometres of territory, along with

rights over subsurface resources. To manage this effectively, the Tlicho government will be created. Among other responsibilities, this government will manage resources and enact laws in areas such as aboriginal language and culture.

The roles and responsibilities of all elected officials are set out in the Tlicho constitution. The constitution includes a number of provisions to ensure that the Tlicho government is politically and financially accountable and that the rights and freedoms of all residents, including non-Tlicho citizens, are protected.

•(1250)

Along with these new powers, the Tlicho would assume several new responsibilities. Once Bill C-14 becomes law, for instance, the Indian Act would no longer apply to the Tlicho people. They would however be subject to all federal legislation of general application such as the Criminal Code. Like all Canadians, the Tlicho would continue to be subject to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Bill C-14 would have little effect on Canada's international legal obligations. As legal counsel for the Tlicho stated clearly to the committee reviewing the bill, "There is nothing in this agreement that interferes with Canada's jurisdiction to enter into international agreements".

I am convinced that the agreement will soon have a significant and positive impact within Canada as the Tlicho realize the numerous advantages that self-government would make available. With an open, transparent and accountable government in place, the Tlicho would be better able to attract new investors and business partners, and foster economic growth.

They have done that without legislation already and Bill C-14 would empower that move even more. The Tlicho would be better able to design and deliver enhanced social services and improve the availability of safe and affordable housing. The Tlicho people would also be better able to develop a high quality education system that meets the needs of their communities.

Ultimately, as Tlicho communities grow stronger and more self-sufficient, all Canadians stand to benefit. Furthermore, the success of the Tlicho would be a success for Canada. The Tlicho would inspire other aboriginal communities to realize their own vision of self-government and prosperity.

Today we have an opportunity to send a clear message to all Canadians that the government is determined to work with aboriginal communities and enable them to reach their whole potential. The legislation before us today carries the principled and worthy aspirations of a people, and provides a road map for other first nations, Inuit, Metis and northerners to follow.

I hope that I can count on the support of my hon. colleagues to help us move the legislation to the Senate for final approval in order to give the Tlicho people the tools they need to build the future they deserve and desire.

Government Orders

Bill C-14 is an outstanding piece of work put together by the people from my territory and from their own territory. These people have a long history and an attachment to their land, and a vision for their people. This is what the real Canada is all about. Canada is about a place of equal opportunity for everyone. This legislation gives full expression to what the leadership has as a vision for its people.

I implore my hon. colleagues to support Bill C-14 and help us get it through so that we can have a full and complete cycle of Tlicho legislation in place.

• (1255)

Mr. Jeremy Harrison (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for her speech on this subject. The Tlicho people are here today, but I realize we cannot acknowledge their presence.

I was at the committee meetings. I am the vice-chair of the aboriginal affairs committee. One of the concerns that my party had with this piece of legislation had to do with article 7.13.2 of the agreement. The provision reads as follows:

Prior to consenting to be bound by an international treaty that may affect a right of the Tlicho Government, the Tlicho First Nation or a Tlicho Citizen, flowing from the Agreement, the Government of Canada shall provide an opportunity for the Tlicho Government to make its views known with respect to the international treaty either separately or through a forum.

My reading of that is it essentially creates a duty to consult with regard to Canada entering into international obligations that may have some effect, however oblique that effect may be, on the Tlicho government. Obviously it is of great concern that we may be hamstringing our ability to enter into international agreements and infringing on the sovereignty of this country.

Under questioning I never did get a straight answer from government bureaucrats, the parliamentary secretary or any official of the government on this question. The attorney for the Tlicho did mention in committee that this particular provision was included at the insistence of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. I must say I find this very strange. It is something to which I never did receive an answer as to why this provision was included at the insistence of DFAIT.

Perhaps the minister could comment on this. Could she offer an explanation as to why DFAIT wanted this provision in the agreement?

Hon. Ethel Blondin-Andrew: Mr. Speaker, I attended the standing committee and actually responded to this question. I know that officials from the Department of Justice also responded. The Tlicho legal advisers also dealt with this.

I want the people of Canada and the House to know that the Government of Canada retains sole jurisdiction to enter into international agreements, even though some of these agreements might affect a right of the Tlicho government, the Tlicho First Nation or a Tlicho citizen flowing from the Tlicho agreement.

However, Canada has agreed to provide an opportunity for the Tlicho government to make its views known either separately or through a forum, with respect to any future international treaty, if such a treaty might affect Tlicho rights.

It should be noted that this right is not the same as an obligation to consult. Consultation is a defined term in the agreement and a more elaborate process.

I do not think that citizens across Canada and members of the House need to fear that this will create some kind of a precedent internationally. That is not the case. It is very clear in the legislation. It is very prescribed. If the member would take the time to read the legislation and look at that section, he would see that the answers are contained therein.

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this question has twiggged my curiosity. It is my understanding that we have over 600 first nations communities across Canada. We have provinces and territories and lots of communities across the country.

Is this a signal from the government that before it embarks on carrying out foreign policy or entering into treaties, it will consult with all of these communities to determine whether there will be any adverse effect on those communities or provinces or those other 600 first nations communities across the country? If the answer is yes to that, what kind of bureaucracy does the government intend to create to deal with something along that line?

• (1300)

Hon. Ethel Blondin-Andrew: Mr. Speaker, if hon. members would take the time to try to grasp the answers that are being given, they would know that this is a very carefully and legally defined provision and term. It is in the legislation.

Regarding creating bureaucracy, this is not about creating bureaucracy or huge precedents. This is about enabling and empowering the aboriginal people of Canada to participate and to give fullest expression to their place in Canada, to give the full rights of every democratic avenue in Canada to those people, to be empowered and to have a future in Canada like that of everyone else. Economic opportunities and all of those things that everybody else enjoys will be enjoyed by aboriginal people. This document does that. This document was very carefully crafted.

I have sat through many runs on many pieces of legislation throughout my 16 years here. This is one of the best pieces of legislation in terms of claims and self-government I have seen to date.

Mr. Jim Prentice (Calgary Centre-North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-14, the Tlicho land claims and self-government act.

With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I would like at the outset to join my colleagues in welcoming the Tlicho dignitaries to the House today. This is indeed a strong community, one with strong leadership. The Tlicho elders, their negotiators and council members under the leadership of Grand Chief Rabesca deserve our recognition today.

The questions which our party has spoken to with respect to this agreement concern themselves less with the future direction of the Tlicho people and more with the failure on the part of the Government of Canada to achieve with this treaty something which will be enduring and in the best interests of Canada.

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I intend to place on the record particular concerns which we have, having recently come into possession of a copy of the cabinet framework within which this very agreement was negotiated. It is quite evident that the agreement as negotiated does not accord with the directions and approvals that were given by cabinet to the negotiators.

I intend to place some of that on the record in the course of my comments today. Members will see that in a number of very important respects, specifically the issues that our party has raised in the House of Commons previously, the cabinet which authorized the conduct of these negotiations was itself concerned about these very issues.

I think everyone is aware that I have had a lengthy history in this country as an outspoken advocate on fairness in the resolution of claims, both as a negotiator on the Sturgeon Lake tripartite settlement and also as a commissioner of the Indian Claims Commission where I served for some 10 years and assisted as a co-chair of that commission.

I have felt throughout that time that it is in Canada's best interests to resolve comprehensive claims and to achieve certainty through the negotiation of self-government agreements. I have also, however, for nearly 20 years been very outspoken about the need to resolve these issues and claims in a way that is in the best interests of Canada, and which ensures that Canada's international sovereignty is protected, and that our Constitution and charter are respected and that we have workable systems of government. Those are the very concerns which we have raised in the House and which I will speak to today.

Ultimately, we anticipate that the Tlicho legislation will clear Parliament because the Liberals, NDP and Bloc Québécois are supportive of this legislation. Our party is the only party that has spoken in terms of the long term governability of this country and concerns that we have with the agreement.

It warrants emphasis that this may be the most significant Indian treaty negotiated in the past 100 years. It is the first modern treaty which combines both a comprehensive claim settlement and a self-government agreement. It will create a Tlicho government in the Northwest Territories. That government will have greater jurisdiction than a municipality. It will have greater jurisdiction than a province.

The lands now owned by the Tlicho under this agreement, assuming it is approved by the House, will be the largest aboriginal land holding in North America, consisting of lands approximately half the size of New Brunswick. The Tlicho people will receive approximately \$150 million. The agreement also will define a precedent for negotiations with the other Dene first nations in the Northwest Territories, specifically the Sahtu, the Gwich'in, the Akaitcho, the Deh Cho and the Inuvialuit.

The Conservative Party's opposition to the Tlicho legislation, as I say, relates not to our concerns about the Tlicho themselves, but rather to Canada's failure in the negotiating process to protect Canada's best interests on these four points: first, incursions upon Canada's sovereignty and external relations; second, concerns regarding the failure to achieve public government in the Northwest Territories; third, the absence of finality; and fourth, jurisdictional overlap and confusion.

We have consistently voiced our concerns in a principled way, but last week I came into possession of a supporting document from an unexpected source, the 1995 cabinet approval which authorized the Tlicho negotiations. This document warrants emphasis because it speaks to the very concerns which the Conservative Party has raised about this agreement.

● (1305)

Let me first address the matter of Canadian sovereignty. The 1995 cabinet document, which authorized the commencement of the Tlicho negotiations and other inherent self-government negotiations, could not possibly be clearer. Item number 14, on matters not for negotiation, states that there are a number of subject matters that the federal government is not prepared to negotiate with aboriginal groups in the context of implementing the inherent right of self-government. These subject matters fall into two categories: first, powers relating to Canadian sovereignty, defence and external relations; and second, other national interest powers. It states that In these areas exclusive jurisdiction must remain with the federal government.

Moreover, it states that there are no compelling reasons for aboriginal governments of institutions to exercise powers in these areas which cannot be characterized as either integral to aboriginal culture or internal to aboriginal groups. Subject matters in this category would include international diplomatic relations and foreign policy.

This is a remarkable document. We have the very cabinet approval which initiated the negotiation of this agreement. It is a substantial document, 60 to 70 pages in length, well thought out and well crafted. It recommended that Canada not compromise its external relations or its international sovereignty in any way in any of these negotiations.

One thing is perfectly clear about this agreement; and that is, in item 7.13, Canada has negotiated very specifically with respect to international legal obligations. Included in the agreement is item 7.13.2, which has been spoken to earlier. It states:

Prior to consenting to be bound by an international treaty that may affect a right of the Tlicho Government, the Tlicho First Nation or a Tlicho Citizen, flowing from the Agreement, the Government of Canada shall provide an opportunity for the Tlicho Government to make its views known with respect to the international treaty either separately or through a forum.

The minister has spoken publicly about this provision. My understanding of what he has said is not to worry about the provision because in effect Canada can do what it wants anyway. That is very interesting. However, that is not what the agreement says. Moreover, the agreement contains an arbitration provision.

If Canada can do whatever it wants at the end of the day, why does this complicated agreement entrench in the Canadian Constitution an arbitration provision that governs the relationship between the Tlicho people and the Government of Canada in respect of international matters?

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Clearly what has happened is that the executive branch of the government has failed to adhere to the very terms of reference under which these negotiations were authorized, and it leads to undeniable questions. Will these benefits be extended to other aboriginal groups with which self-government negotiations are undertaken? It is worth recognizing that there will be self-government tables in 631 other situations. Are all these other communities to be accorded the same right? Are other Canadians to be accorded the same right? Will this country be governable in terms of its foreign relations and external relations and its international sovereignty in 100 years if this pattern is replicated? That is the first issue that this agreement raises.

The second matter which I wish to address relates to the very difficult question of public governance. Once again, the cabinet approval of 1995 is remarkable in its clarity. It states that in the federal government's view, the creation of separate aboriginal governments in the Northwest Territories is neither practical nor feasible, although the creation of an aboriginal institutional capacity to exercise certain authorities or govern its participation in public government may be negotiated. However, the primary approach should focus on providing aboriginal people with specific guarantees within public government institutions.

• (1310)

What the cabinet recommended and approved in 1995 was that the negotiations in the Northwest Territories should be conducted on the same basis as Nunavut. In Nunavut we have a public government. The difference between a public government and what we have here is the difference between a government in which all citizens have the right to participate and have equal democratic status, on the one hand being a public government and a situation in which governance is based upon race and upon registration.

What happened in 1995 is the cabinet said not to go there, because the consequences were clear. We will not now have public government in the Northwest Territories in the way that cabinet recommended in 1995. Instead we will have a series of racially based states up the Mackenzie Valley in which the democratic status of individual Canadians depends upon their categorization under the Indian Act.

It is not only the Conservative Party that has recommended against this, it is the cabinet of the government in 1995 that said not to get into this kind of arrangement.

In other words, in the future in the Northwest Territories, as the government sees it, Canadian citizens will not enjoy the same democratic rights, depending upon whether they are an aboriginal person or a non-aboriginal person. In fact, an aboriginal person, such as a Métis, will not have the same democratic position as a citizen who is an Indian registered under the Indian Act.

The Tlicho government is exactly the kind of aboriginal government that the cabinet recommended against in 1995 and the difference is profound, as one can see in comparing what will happen in the Northwest Territories to what has happened in Nunavut.

Last week in the *National Post* the minister published a letter to the editor addressing this issue. He put forward the most remarkable proposition which I have heard in some time. He said that we should not worry about this issue because 90% of the people who comprised

the local population were registered Indian citizens anyway". That is a remarkable proposition. If that is the policy of the government with respect to democratic franchise and the advancement of the rights of Canadian citizens under the charter, then Canadians need to know. It is an incredible proposition. If it applied in this country reciprocally, we will have the sort of country in which I do not believe Canadians are interested.

All this gives rise to important charter issues. The government states that the charter applies to all Canadians and it applies to the Tlicho. Unfortunately, that response is superficial and it does not reflect a close analysis of the documents which are being approved by the House of Commons.

It ignores, firstly, the possible ramifications of section 25 of the Constitution which specifically says that the provisions of the charter do not apply to aboriginal self-government and to aboriginal Canadians in the same way that they apply to other citizens. There are differences. It also ignores the Tlicho people's own constitution, which has been created under this legislative framework, that establishes two official languages, for example, neither of which is the French language.

Most interestingly, if one examines the Tlicho constitution, one will see that decisions of the Tlicho government are not open to question or challenge in any judicial form. If the Canadian Charter does apply, that is a very remarkable application which has no other parallels in Canada of which I am aware. It is a prohibitive clause that says that government decisions cannot be taken to court.

That is what we are creating with this legislative framework. In response the government says that on a superficial basis the charter is respected because all Canadians live under the charter. The government is not looking specifically at what it is doing in this document.

The next matter in respect of which our party has spoken is the whole question of finality. I have said that the Tlicho people and the Tlicho negotiators deserve our admiration. They are credible people. They are conscientious. They have done a remarkable job in their negotiations. They have achieved a comprehensive claims settlement which is generous, and we make no criticism of the generosity of it. However, it is decidedly less final than other modern settlements. It can be, for example, compared with the Nisga'a treaty.

• (1315)

The Nisga'a agreement is a fair comparison because it was negotiated several years ago. The Nisga'a people signed off on their rights and entitlements under section 35 of the Constitution. They executed releases and indemnities. They ceded and surrendered their wider aboriginal title. They agreed after a transitional period to be subject to Canada income taxation.

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None of those matters form part of the Tlicho agreement. One should examine other agreements such as the Labrador Inuit comprehensive claim settlement, which will be before the House after Christmas. It is an agreement that provides finality and certainty. Why does this one not? That is the question which we have raised in the House of Commons and at committee, and in respect of which we have not received an answer. There is in addition the clause contained in the agreement which allows matters of tax power, tax exemption, royalties and the like to be opened up in the future as well.

The fourth issue is the question of constitutional workability. No one need take my word on this. They need only refer to the independent examiner retained by the federal government who published the smart regulation report. This is a report of which the government is proud and of which it speaks often.

The smart regulation report says that the Northwest Territories at this point in terms of regulation is a spiderweb of complexity that it is essentially stands to threaten the Mackenzie Valley pipeline because there is a myriad of governments and legislation, federal, territorial, and aboriginal, and a myriad of boards and agencies. In that case it is will take the proponents of the pipeline over 2,000 approvals to build the Mackenzie Valley pipeline.

Now this agreement does absolutely nothing to simplify or clarify the complexity which the government has made out of the Northwest Territories. In fact, it adopts a model of federal aboriginal concurrence with Tlicho paramountcy, which will make the situation even more confusing. The provisions of this agreement are extraordinarily complex. They are sometimes inconsistent and they are extremely ambiguous in terms of the paramountcy provisions.

What is most concerning is we are taking a 208 page legal document and incorporating it into the Canadian Constitution as a treaty. The entire Canadian Constitution is only 50 pages in length. We are adopting a 208 page document, constitutionally entrenching it and doing it in a way that the Parliament of Canada can never amend it because it becomes a section 35 constitutionally entrenched document.

Other jurisdictions, such as British Columbia, have wisely said that this is not a prudent strategy. The point that I will make again is the 1995 cabinet approval says "don't do this" because we will be effectively be incorporating all the nuts and bolts of government into a constitutional document that cannot be amended.

• (1320)

Those are the reasons that our party has spoken against the agreement and the legislation. It is an important agreement and a precedent setting agreement for which we have grave concerns.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments which were very well thought out. I appreciate the loyal opposition party putting someone in that role who has had some experience in land claims and can do a detailed analysis of agreements.

Unfortunately, though, I do not think he has convinced us of the four points. I know these four points were brought up at the

beginning of the debate. I also appreciate the fact that he brought new evidence today.

However I want to reiterate that there is not a problem with those points.

The first point had to do with this being the first time that two agreements have been combined. This is not the first time because the Nisga'a agreement combined both the self-government and the land claim agreement.

He made four major points on international trade. As it says in the agreement, the parties specifically consult if an international agreement will affect governments. Why would our government not want to consult if it would affect another government? We make the final decision. We do what we have to do. It certainly makes sense that land claims in this country, as the member will well know, set a new environment of negotiation, a new relationship between aboriginal people and other Canadian governments. Under those circumstances, it would only be polite to consult and do what we could if there were concerns we were not aware of.

The second major item was that a public government has to have Indian Act members. Frankly, I do not understand this concern. This is what happens in all the land claims agreements across the country. There are all sorts of both settled and unsettled land claims where first nation people have provisions specifically for them.

The third point is about the charter. It states right in the agreement that the charter applies and that if there is any discrepancy between the agreement and the Constitution, the agreement applies and the agreement states specifically that the charter applies. We have said that on numerous occasions.

In finality is not a new concept. If some other negotiated land claim settlement has a well worked out financial taxation provision, why would that not be accessible to the Tlicho? We do not want to have a checkerboard of different taxation regimes in the Northwest Territories, so why would they not all be the same if that is the best? That has been applied in Yukon and there has been no problem with that. Once again, this is not a new provision.

On constitutional workability, the hon. member says that it adds no clarity. First, thousands of decisions for pipelines have to go through all sorts of governments, municipal and first nation governments. In a country that allows people to have their say at a local level, why not? We cannot disband the thousands of municipalities or first nation governments and their ability to govern in their own area.

The hon. member says that there is nothing to clarify. We just had the supreme court reading on the Haida agreement on Queen Charlotte Islands which stated that government has to consult and take into consideration concerns when there is no agreement. Now that there will be an agreement here, it gives developers far more clarity on exactly what conditions they will fall under. The Haida agreement, which was settled a couple of weeks ago, makes the agreement even more instrumental in promoting development in the Northwest Territories and the Tlicho land claim.

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• (1325)

Mr. Jim Prentice: Madam Speaker, I want to say at the outset that I have great respect for my colleague. He has considerable experience and is well respected in this House.

The concern our party has raised with respect to the Tlicho agreement and the Tlicho legislation is not directed at the Tlicho people. The Tlicho people have been doing what any other group or any other first nation would do. They have been trying to negotiate the best deal possible for them.

The concerns we have raised concern the failure of the Government of Canada to invent institutions and make government arrangements that protect and advance the interests of Canada. That is the government's responsibility, not the responsibility of the Tlicho people at the negotiating table. It should be the responsibility of the Government of Canada through the executive branch to advance the interests of the government.

Specifically, in response to my learned colleague's comments, this entire debate about public government versus racially based self-government, these are not just concerns of the Conservative Party of Canada. These find their expression in the executive approval under which these negotiations were started in 1995.

What the cabinet was told and agreed with at that time was that because of the demographic mix in the Northwest Territories, like Nunavut, it was possible, if it were done correctly, to create public government institutions that would advance the interests of all Canadians without regard to race.

I fear that where we are headed with all of this is to a system where Canadian citizens have different status depending upon whether they are Caucasian or a Métis citizen on the one hand, or a registered Indian citizen in the north on the other.

That is not the framework upon which our success as a country has been founded. That is clearly where this agreement is taking us. Mark my words, this will prove in time to have been in error.

Mr. Jeremy Harrison (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Madam Speaker, first I would like to thank the hon. member for Calgary Centre-North for his presentation. In my short while in this House I must say that is one of the finest presentations I have heard. The hon. member brought forward many important issues.

The particular question I have for the hon. member concerns, what I find to be, the shocking disregard for the cabinet's own guidelines and directives on this negotiation. We have now heard what the original 1995 cabinet guidelines for the negotiation of the Tlicho agreement included. We have seen what the final product is, which is before this House right now. I must say that the discrepancy between the two is shocking.

The explanation for the 180 degree change in the course of the government has not been explained. I just asked the hon. minister to explain why DFAIT insisted on this particular provision regarding international sovereignty be included but I did not get a straight answer again for probably the 10th time.

Would the hon. member for Calgary Centre-North have some ideas as to why the government deviated so much from the original cabinet guidelines on this negotiation?

• (1330)

Mr. Jim Prentice: Madam Speaker, I also found the memorandum to cabinet entitled, A Framework for the Implementation of the Inherent Right and Negotiation of Self-Government, dated May 11, 1995, to be a very illuminating document. I should also point out that it was presented to cabinet by the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-status Indians and the Minister of Justice.

In terms of why this document has not been followed, it seems to me that there has been an absence of vision on the part of the government in the negotiation of this agreement. It is a complicated agreement. No one disagrees with that. It is a precedent setting agreement. However, if ever there was a time for the Government of Canada to have had, through its executive branch, a vision of where they are taking Canada in this difficult area, this was the time.

We have not seen that. We will not see public government institutions in the north. Instead, we have an agreement which, I suggest, in the long term will make parts of the Canadian government system unworkable.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Cleary (Louis-Saint-Laurent, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by saying just how proud I am to speak to the House today on a subject that I have heard debated for a number of years, and to realize what the Tlicho have accomplished.

It is therefore a pleasure to speak to the House and particularly to congratulate the political leaders of the Tlicho for their magnificent accomplishment. I would also like to congratulate the other parties. No negotiations are held in a vacuum. Other parties are always involved.

As far as comprehensive land claims or self-government are concerned, this social blueprint will mean an enormous advantage for the aboriginal people of the Northwest Territories.

I wish to assure the Tlicho people that the Bloc Québécois and I will continue to monitor the progress of implementing this agreement. I have seen too many clauses, unfortunately, included in agreements but not implemented as part of the social blueprint. I want the Tlicho to know that I will always be pleased to help ensure that what was in the agreement actually gets to their community.

I met with the Tlicho political leaders right after my election, to offer my support and that of my party. I wanted to find out what their vision of the situation was. Hon. members are no doubt aware of how open they are to discussion. They worked with us as they did with the others to ensure that everything turned out as planned.

They are making their dreams a reality. May those dreams be as wonderful as possible and may they bring the Tlicho everything they deserve, after all the years of discussion. I can understand their pride and their desire to get this settled. Anyone concerned with discussing a social blueprint for 15 or 20 or more years wants to see it realized.

Government Orders

They consulted with the entire population, both aboriginal and Canadian. They worked with the other nations to ensure each had its proper place. They were successful, in my opinion, at leaving other nations space, while gaining respect for themselves. They devoted over 10 years to realizing this social blueprint and they have informed everyone else about it in detail.

Thus, that is probably why there were so few opposing views expressed in committee; for the good and simple reason that the Tlicho had worked hard to provide information and convince people to give them a chance.

No aboriginal or Métis groups and no Canadian or governmental groups made any objection to the realization of this agreement during the committee's deliberations. Everyone worked together to make it possible for the Tlicho to celebrate their new vision of society this holiday season.

●(1335)

We have sensed a magnificent feeling of cooperation and understanding with the other people living in the same land. The wake-up call for governments came, we must remember, with the Calder case in 1973. That was when it was realized that recognition of aboriginal rights could affect the entire country. If the Calder case had accepted that definition of rights, it would have been an enormous social change. It was not for nothing that the federal government then began scrambling to invite the First Nations to sit down at the negotiating table and enter negotiations to settle these issues through agreements and not through the courts or any other avenues. Panic set in, and the trustee issued its first policy on land claims and rights for those nations where they had not been extinguished.

It is obvious that, for an aboriginal group, governance must follow its customs and its own issues. They must be adaptable. They need the other governments to understand that there may be certain things on which the Tlicho negotiators and the governments—because the others must take part, too—have negotiated together and reached an agreement. Thus, their pride is very understandable, because I, as a negotiator, would have liked to have negotiated such an agreement.

In 1982, during the repatriation of the Constitution, Mr. Trudeau decided to recognize aboriginal rights in section 35, which affirms the aboriginal and treaty rights of aboriginal peoples of Canada including those acquired through land claims.

Since that time, the Supreme Court of Canada has evolved. I do not understand why the attempt is being made to keep aboriginals from developing. It is clear that there is an enormous amount of catching up to do in terms of rights, without which, the aboriginals will continue to be penalized.

Since 1973, 17 land claims have been settled, including 14 in the northern territories. The north is a favourable place for trying to reach interesting agreements for aboriginals.

In 1921, Tlicho Chief Monfwi was one of signatories of Treaty 11, the last in the series of numbered treaties. In 1990, after having studied the entire matter thoroughly based on other studies—such as the Penner report—the royal commission found that even the historical treaties needed to be renegotiated.

●(1340)

Thus, the Tlicho did exactly what people in aboriginal groups want to do. They corrected what had been done quickly and superficially. The desire was for aboriginals to continue to be subject to this type of utterly outdated treaty.

I think it is important to Canadians for aboriginals to be happy, proud and active in society in the future. Furthermore, the royal commission stipulated that the Government of Canada has a duty to ensure this.

Once again, I want to congratulate the Tlicho people and their Grand Chief, because they got their rights recognized through negotiation. We must congratulate ourselves that it is possible in a country like ours to sign agreements that allow us to recognize all the rights of aboriginals.

I thank them for the example they have given us. You probably remember other agreements or negotiations in Quebec when there were all kinds of disputes between Quebecers, aboriginals and the entire population. However, everything went smoothly with the Tlicho. They managed to agree on something valid that will help them to be happy and to believe in the future of Canada.

●(1345)

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the NDP caucus I am very proud to rise today and speak in favour of Bill C-14. I am proud to be a part of this. I think I can speak for the entire NDP caucus when I say that we share the same commitment and sentiment toward having the bill expeditiously pass through the House and on to the Senate, because we are very committed to getting this whole process through as quickly as we can.

I would like to begin by offering my recognition of and my thanks and heartfelt congratulations to the Tlicho people for having achieved this monumental point in their history, the product of more than decade of consultations and negotiations. The agreement between the Tlicho and the governments of Canada and the Northwest Territories is something for all of us here today to be proud of.

I would specifically like to recognize and pay tribute to a few people: Grand Chief Joe Rabesca, along with the chiefs from the various communities of the Tlicho territory, both his negotiating teams, with Mr. John B. Zoe, who was the chief negotiator, as well as Eddie Erasmus and James Washie, self-government specialists.

We believe that with the signing of this agreement we begin a new chapter in Canada's history today. I believe that with this agreement we are strengthening Canada's federation. We are in a way committing ourselves to a new north, one that represents the vision and the spirit of the people who live there. By doing so, I believe that we make our country stronger and better able to meet the challenges of the future.

Government Orders

This historic agreement is the first and the most comprehensive land claim and self-government agreement in the Northwest Territories. It can serve as a model, but not as a template, I caution, for other communities in Canada and in fact for other countries for implementing self-government, because this agreement defines rights and shows the world how diversity creates strength and how partnership builds on this model.

As a result of the agreement, the Tlicho will receive a block of land just slightly smaller than Switzerland. On this land the Tlicho will own the resources, which will give them the tools they need to strengthen their culture and their future. I believe that agreements such as this one provide the certainty and the security that all of us need to plan for ourselves and our future; certainty and predictable decision making that will interest investment and growth in the north.

I am very proud to be here as a member of Parliament, as a member of the New Democratic Party and as a Canadian. I am proud because the agreement represents what is best about Canada, I believe. We should and can lead the world in the recognition of aboriginal rights. In fact, we are the only country in the world to recognize those rights in our Constitution.

Our history and experience to date in recognizing and acknowledging aboriginal and treaty rights have been Canada's greatest failure and Canada's greatest shame. This is why I am proud to be able to stand in the House of Commons and celebrate with the Tlicho people; that for once, this one time, Canada is doing the right thing in recognizing aboriginal and treaty rights as they manifest themselves in this historic document and this bill today, which gives force to the Tlicho agreement.

Aboriginal and treaty rights are, I believe, an expression of Canadian values, and with this agreement we put these values into writing. We show how values that seem abstract and intangible can in fact make a difference, creating opportunity, prosperity, a stronger north and a stronger Tlicho people. The agreement will touch on all aspects of life. It is unique in that way. In addition to encouraging economic development and partnership, it also paves the way for new jobs and educational opportunities.

The Tlicho government will be able to put in place programs that promote the Tlicho language and the Tlicho way of life. I was pleased to see the strong support this agreement had within the Tlicho people and to see that in fact this agreement finds its origins in the best principles of democratic process.

Ninety-three per cent of all of eligible voters came out to have their say in this historic agreement. Of that 93%, 84% voted yes to the Tlicho agreement. We should have such voter turnout in the broader Canadian mainstream democratic process. To my mind, with no hesitation and no degree of uncertainty, we can say that the Tlicho people have spoken. They were consulted. They understood. They came out to vote. They exercised the democratic process. They have spoken.

• (1350)

It is our job now as members of Parliament in the House of Commons to give force and effect to that agreement and not stand in the way of it or block it in any unnecessary way. We must pass Bill

C-14 so that the Tlicho agreement can come into full force and effect.

It is one of the ironies in Canada that it often takes us much longer to reconcile ourselves with the consequences of historic events than it takes for them to unfold in the first place. There are perhaps no people in Canada more painfully aware of this than the Tlicho Dene of the Northwest Territories.

The Tlicho, who number about 3,000, live in the four communities of Behcho Ko, Wha Ti, Gameti and Wekweti, Snare Lake, some of the oldest and most traditional aboriginal communities anywhere in Canada or in the north. They are also one of the most dangerously threatened aboriginal groups, having been devastated by disease from the outside world. By 1900, 1 in 10 Tlicho had died from measles. An influenza epidemic in 1928, and I quote one of the historical writers of the time, "left so many dead that in many camps there was no one left to bury them". By 1940, many anthropologists felt that the Dogrib people could never survive, that they were on the road to extinction, an endangered species, so to speak.

The road back has been an arduous one and a journey of decades, but it has led to a settlement that sets proud new standards of aboriginal self-government, resource management and social services. In a nutshell, this agreement puts in force the conditions by which aboriginal peoples can control their own destiny.

I do not need to remind anyone of what we have heard in the House of Commons many times: that all the empirical evidence and all the studies indicate that successful economic development among first nation communities is directly proportional to their degree of self-governance, their degree of self-determination. Those are the successful models of the famous Harvard study by Stephen Cornell, who went all through the United States and showed which communities are making it and which are failing. The ones making it are the ones that have the highest degree of self-determination. That is what this act today and the Tlicho agreement give.

The first milestone on the road back from virtual extinction was the year 1970. It was then that the Trudeau government of the day approved in principle what one scientist had been calling the largest engineering venture ever undertaken by man, which was the construction of the Mackenzie Valley oil and gas pipeline. We know that the long term consequences of that pipeline were of great interest to people of the day, both in the north and in the south. There were great reservations about building this pipeline and about the effect it would have not only on the environment but in regard to the social and cultural impact on the people of the area.

There were many social concerns, of course, and at that time the Berger inquiry in 1975 led a royal commission into the proposed pipeline. After almost two years of hearings in every community along the proposed pipeline, Berger recommended a 10 year moratorium so that further environmental study could take place during the negotiation of native land claims as well.

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It was Berger's point of view that northern aboriginal people, the Métis, first nations and Inuit, must become full and equal partners in any future development project and thereby reclaim former levels of aboriginal self-governance. I put it to everyone today that for 1975 this was radical thinking. This was an insight that was hard to sell and even more difficult for southerners to understand, but we can see now that there was great wisdom in what Berger wrote at that time. The moratorium was granted by the prime minister of the day, Pierre Trudeau, and the negotiations began in earnest. This, I argue, was the beginning of the road back.

• (1355)

At one time, really not that long ago, we talked about the northern trinity in northern Canada. The northern trinity meant that southern Canadians were the guardians of the north. The Hudson's Bay Company, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Christian churches constituted the northern trinity of southerners who were dictating how the north should develop and how it should unfold.

It really was not until the interest in the north generated by the Mackenzie Valley pipeline in that region finally broke this trinity that reason and logic and a different mindset in fact took over. That began the long and arduous process which has resulted in the coming to this debate in the House of Commons today at third reading a bill that will give manifestation to an agreement that represents a generation or more of historical progress, I would say, for aboriginal people in that region of Canada's north.

This treaty is the latest and perhaps the most innovative example of cooperation and consultation today among the three levels of government: territorial, federal and aboriginal. Many MPs here would be interested to know that the original claim that was contemplated was 230,000 square kilometres, roughly the size of the Yukon territory. This was the traditional territory called *Monfwi gogwas ndeniitle* and was first legally identified by Tlicho chief Monfwi at the Treaty 8 signing in 1921. This was the origin and the starting point for these long processes of negotiations.

In the final agreement, instead of the 230,000 square kilometres that constitute the traditional territory of the Tlicho people, we have ended up agreeing upon an area of roughly 39,000 square kilometres of land in fee simple title and providing \$152 million of federal funding over 15 years. This land claim, with a land mass that is seven times the size of Prince Edward Island and, as I said earlier, roughly the size of Switzerland, includes the northern territory of Yellowknife between Great Slave and Great Bear Lakes, bordering Nunavut.

The agreement would mean that the Tlicho would hold complete surface and subsurface resource rights, full hunting and trapping rights and control over renewable and non-renewable resource harvesting, something that I personally celebrate. Being maybe one of the few people in Canada, other than those in this room, who has read the Indian Act, I am aware of how little access to resources was afforded to those aboriginal people under the Indian Act.

In fact, the only specific natural resources cited in the Indian Act for the use of Indians are gravel, clay, mud, sand and other worthless commodities. There is no mention in the Indian Act of oil, natural gas, diamonds, gold, pearls or rubies, any of the things we can think of that have of any value, or even trees or fish.

None of them are mentioned in the Indian Act. Indians are not allowed access to those things. They are allowed access to mud, gravel and clay, and then people in the south ask why these people do not exercise some entrepreneurship and go out and create small businesses. Out of what? Mud, gravel, clay or sand?

Are you signalling me, Madam Speaker?

• (1400)

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): Excuse me. The member will have five minutes remaining. We will now proceed to statements by members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today, at 5:30 p.m., the Maison Unies-Vers-Femmes of Gatineau will be holding a vigil at the Mémoire d'Elles park, at the corner of Gréber Boulevard and Saint-Jean-Baptiste Street.

This year, the gathering will recognize the tragic death of Carole Lirette, who was shot down in cold blood with her new boyfriend by her ex-spouse.

For anyone in 2004 to still look at a woman as their possession is both criminal and unacceptable.

I take this opportunity to recognize the tremendous and miraculous job that the team led by Danielle Marcil, at Maison Unies-Vers-Femmes, has been doing for 25 years. The Maison Unies-Vers-Femmes is a place, in the riding of Gatineau, where women who are the victims of spousal violence and their children can seek support and shelter.

Violence and discrimination against women are two human rights issues originating from women's social, economic and political inequality. Violence against women and children is unacceptable and must be combated by all means, and relentlessly.

Come and honour the memory of Carole Lirette at tonight's vigil.

* * *

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Rona Ambrose (Edmonton—Spruce Grove, CPC): Madam Speaker, today is the 15th anniversary of the murder of 14 young women at the École polytechnique in Montreal. We pay tribute to their lives, their contributions and the accomplishments that would have been theirs.

These students were killed simply because they were women. They deserved to succeed, to enjoy life and to be happy.

[*English*]

On December 6, 1989 we were reminded that we must constantly work to eradicate violence against women. Women need to feel safe when reporting violence to the police and they will feel safe and protected only when those who commit violence are punished.

We also honour their families. The most important thing that every member of this House can do is to work together so that women feel safe in their homes, in their communities, at work and in their classrooms.

[Translation]

The Progressive Conservative Party of Canada honours the memory of these victims and pledges to eradicate violence against women.

* * *

[English]

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mr. Russ Powers (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today, December 6, is Canada's National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. This commemoration reminds us of the alarming rates of violence against women in our society. A failure to acknowledge this tough reality constitutes a failure to commit to its end.

A 1999 Statistics Canada survey found that after dark two-thirds of women feel unsafe while awaiting or using public transit and 18% of women do not feel safe in their own neighbourhoods.

Today and every day we must take time to reflect on the lived reality of fear that haunts most women's lives.

This reality affects us all, regardless of our age, gender or life circumstances. It affects our mothers, our sisters, our daughters and our friends, neighbours and colleagues.

We can end the violence. We must first acknowledge it exists, then refuse to remain silent, and finally, work together to end the violence once and for all.

* * *

[Translation]

CLAUDE FILION

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Madam Speaker, this past weekend we learned of the death of Claude Filion, justice of the Court of Quebec and PQ member of the National Assembly for the riding of Taillon, in Longueuil, from 1985 to 1989.

He was vice-president of Oxfam-Quebec in 1975, as well as head of the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse du Québec from 1996 to 2001.

A well known figure in Quebec political circles, Mr. Filion was second in command and then chief of staff for Pierre-Marc Johnson between 1977 and 1982.

During his mandate as MNA for Taillon, he headed the National Assembly's Committee on Institutions as well as being the official opposition's language policy critic.

This wonderful man will be missed by those of us who have known and worked with him, but we remember him as an upright and loyal individual who loved life, who loved his friends and family, a man with a passion for justice and a profoundly genuine human being.

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On behalf of the residents of Longueuil and my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois, may I extend our deepest sympathies to his family and friends.

* * *

● (1405)

[English]

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Madam Speaker, violence against anyone is unacceptable, irrespective of one's gender, age, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation or mental and physical capabilities, so why do we focus on violence against women today?

Canadian women are more fearful of being victims of crime than are men. Looking at the statistics for sexual assault, criminal harassment and severity of spousal violence, it is no wonder. A majority of the victims of these crimes are women and young girls. In spousal violence alone, female victims are more likely to suffer some kind of physical injury and to be victims of multiple incidents. In 1999, four out of five victims of spousal homicide were female.

The focus on violence against women is not meant to deny or diminish the rate of violence against men. Violence against women is a complex issue. It is closely linked to the attitudes, values and systems that contribute to maintaining and perpetuating inequality of women in Canadian society.

Every Canadian male or female is touched in some way by violence against women. It has an enormous social and economic cost for our communities and the country. Let us work together to put a stop to violence against women.

* * *

RED RIVER FLOODWAY

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Madam Speaker, plans for the expansion of the Red River floodway around Winnipeg are well underway. The cost is expected to be in excess of three-quarters of a billion dollars, with the costs shared equally between the Government of Manitoba and the Government of Canada. However the federal government has been a silent partner, and the concerns of many of the residents of my riding of Selkirk—Interlake have not been adequately addressed.

Although the floodway expansion will provide added flood protection to the city of Winnipeg, the outlet for the floodway is in my riding. People living along the floodway and downstream on the Red River have raised some serious concerns regarding downstream impacts.

The points that still need to be addressed include riverbank stabilization, groundwater contamination, downstream flooding and ice jams. These concerns have not been fully addressed by the floodway authority to the satisfaction of the residents and municipalities in Selkirk—Interlake.

The Government of Canada can no longer be a silent partner on the Red River floodway expansion. It must become active to ensure the concerns of the people of Selkirk—Interlake are adequately met before the project commences.

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VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today we recognize the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

[*Translation*]

It is 15 years since 14 women lost their lives at the École polytechnique de Montréal.

[*English*]

Yet 15 years later, at this very moment across Canada, women are experiencing the obscenity of brutality. Canadian women continue to see their lives ended by senseless acts of violence.

I want to pay tribute to Nelson House in my riding, and to all those shelters and services that help women and their children escape violence, and all the people who continue to work to end this scourge in our society.

* * *

[*Translation*]

UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À MONTRÉAL

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on April 9, 1969, acting on the recommendations made in the Parent report, the Government of Quebec created the Montreal campus of the Université du Québec by merging Collège Sainte-Marie, three teacher training schools and the École des beaux-arts de Montréal.

With its resolute determination and daring, this institution, a product of the quiet revolution, has made a huge contribution to modernizing the face of Quebec society, by reinventing the face of education to fit a nation in a constant state of change while maintaining openness and fraternity with the rest of the world.

UQAM, reflecting as it does both originality and pragmatism, has become a strong force in the development of modern Quebec. From its early days of 3,000 students, it now has more than 42,000 enrolled in 300 different programs.

We salute these builders and visionaries, the talented men and women who have been engaged for the past 35 years in helping create the decision-makers of today and tomorrow. Happy 35th anniversary, UQAM. Keep up the good work.

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UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À MONTRÉAL

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Université du Québec à Montréal is celebrating its 35th anniversary this year. Apparently, I am the first female member of Parliament to have graduated with a law degree from UQAM. I am proud to take this wonderful opportunity to recognize the contribution of this university to the transformation and growth of Quebec society.

Since its creation in 1969, UQAM has awarded over 200,000 degrees. This dynamic and innovative university, founded on the values of commitment, openness and accessibility that continue to guide it today, favours an interdisciplinary approach to education. It

values research and creation, leads the way in a wide variety of fields and encourages its graduates to get involved in their community.

I want to congratulate my alma mater and wish it a long and successful future.

* * *

● (1410)

[*English*]

KEN DANBY

Mr. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past October and November Canada's foremost realist painter, Wellington—Halton Hills resident Ken Danby, unveiled 51 new works at his exhibition at the Carrier Gallery in Toronto. This exhibition was one of the premier arts events of the year.

In addition, the National Portrait Gallery, across the street from this very House, just added Ken Danby's retirement portrait of Wayne Gretzky to its series of window banners. *The Great Farewell* is featured on its own large banner at 100 Wellington Street across from Parliament Hill, depicting Wayne as one of several Canadians honoured for their contributions to the country over the past 200 years.

I hope that all members in this 38th Parliament since Confederation will join me in congratulating Ken and his wife Gillian on the great success of the exhibition in Toronto, for the portrait at the National Portrait Gallery, and for their contribution to the artistic and cultural life of Canada.

* * *

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon. Jean Augustine (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks the 15th anniversary of the shocking murders of 14 young women at the École Polytechnique in Montreal. Out of this tragedy we have come to recognize December 6 as the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women.

We have continued to focus on violence in the lives of women but we know that there is much work still to be done, particularly with visible minorities, aboriginals and disadvantaged women.

Recognizing that violence against women is rooted in gender inequality, I want to take this opportunity to mention the admirable work of a few dedicated organizations in my riding which provide services and support to women. I commend the work of LAMP, Stonegate Community Health Centre, Women's Habitat, the Rotary Club of Etobicoke and the YWCA for their tireless efforts.

Keep up the great work. We must make a difference in the lives of women.

* * *

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the European Union takes over from NATO in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada's military presence in that area is winding down. The mission close-out team will soon be finished its work and a small number of CF personnel will remain as part of a liaison and observation task force.

As NDP defence critic, I want to acknowledge with gratitude and admiration the work done in that part of the world by our troops, both regular and reserve. Over 40,000 Canadians served in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and 25 of them lost their lives while contributing to a peace process designed to end ethnic cleansing and restore democracy and security.

The Canadian peacekeeping and peace building tradition was well served by our forces in UNPROFOR, IFOR, and SFOR, but so was the Canadian combat tradition when 2nd PPCLI found themselves under fire in the Medak pocket, reminding us that combat capability is critical to peacemaking in certain situations.

A hearty thanks to all who served and a grateful merry Christmas to all who continue to serve around the world in places like Afghanistan and here at home.

* * *

YOUTH

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday the President of the Treasury Board attacked Canada's youth.

Faced with my questions about the revenue minister's decision to break all the rules and give a cushy job to his banking buddy, the member for Winnipeg South said "you are young, give it a break". Had the minister directed this anti-youth bigotry at a racial or religious minority, he would have been forced to resign, but apparently, my generation is fair game for ridicule and prejudice.

Well, we are not going to take it any more. The minister might miss the good old days when young people were only good for polishing his shoes and picking up his drycleaning, but those days are gone. We do not need to run for coffee. We can run for election and win. That is why I am part of the youngest caucus in the history of this country.

The minister says "with age comes wisdom". Well, if his crusty attitude represents wisdom, I am happy staying young.

* * *

[Translation]

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is with sadness that we remember the painful helplessness we experienced 15 years ago when 14 female students were murdered at the École polytechnique de Montréal. We shared the pain felt by their mothers, fathers and loved ones.

To restore hope, much work has been done to promote non-violence. Yesterday evening in Montreal, the Fondation des victimes du 6 décembre held a concert of peace and hope entitled "Symphony for my daughter".

I want to also mention the international "Stop Violence Against Women" campaign, launched in March 2004 by Amnesty International, to demand public condemnation of violence against women and compensation for victims.

The Bloc Québécois sees hope for egalitarian and respectful relationships between men and women.

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• (1415)

[English]

UKRAINE

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, democracy is on trial in Ukraine. A wholesale culture of electoral fraud corrupted the election of November 21. Two million took to the street in Ukraine to demand their stolen vote be returned. Four hundred thousand stood in Independence Square alone.

Late last week fireworks over Independence Square signalled a reprieve from the tension and brought about renewed hope. Hundreds of thousands still stand in the cold of Kiev, day and night, to ensure a new vote be held on December 26.

Canada simply must be there with Poland to help Ukraine. The Prime Minister must appoint an impartial parliamentarian for the country of Ukraine. The Prime Minister must immediately approve the resources to allow 1,500 observers to travel to Ukraine to monitor. The Prime Minister must pledge to do better in the future to help emerging democracies such as Ukraine.

Canada's international efforts could not be better spent than to help and then to monitor and assist emerging democracies. Democracy should be a major Canadian export product, a product of truly great international value.

* * *

[Translation]

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on December 6, Canada's National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, it is important to recognize that gender based violence can take many forms. Trafficking in persons is a serious and growing crime, both domestically and internationally.

The United Nations estimates that one million people are trafficked throughout the world every year, mostly women and children, with most forced into prostitution. It is also estimated that the black market in the trafficking and smuggling of persons is so lucrative that it is quickly catching up with the trade in illegal drugs and firearms as a source of profit for organized crime.

Trafficking has its roots in the ongoing inequality of women. The failure to protect and promote women's civil, political, economic and social rights can result in situations in which violence against women is endemic and trafficking flourishes.

On this day dedicated to reflection and action on violence against women, may Canadians everywhere renew their commitment to advancing gender equality and women's human rights, both here and around the world.

Oral Questions

[English]

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mr. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we remember 14 young women, murdered because they were women, on December 6, 1989.

This is our National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women.

[Translation]

In the past 15 years, we have made significant changes: there are fewer firearms related deaths. Our police forces now receive training on domestic violence.

We have succeeded in raising public awareness through political activities such as the white ribbon campaign.

[English]

However, we have also seen many setbacks including reduced funding for women's shelters and decreased social assistance. Worst of all, each year the impact lessens as our memory of the event fades.

This anniversary is the time to renew our vow to fight violence against women in our homes, our workplaces and our schools.

This December 6 we must dedicate ourselves to ensure that violence against women is eliminated and that all women live in dignity, with respect and full equality in our society.

[Translation]

The Speaker: I would now invite members to rise and observe a moment of silence in memory of the victims of the tragic events at the École polytechnique de Montréal, 15 years ago.

[A moment of silence was observed]

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

● (1420)

[Translation]

IRAQ

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday on an American television channel, the Prime Minister promised to send Canadian observers to supervise the election in Iraq. Sending unarmed observers into a combat zone is a very risky undertaking.

How will the Prime Minister ensure the safety of our observers?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously any commitment made by the Government of Canada will take into account the safety of our citizens.

A conference will be held in Ottawa very shortly on organizing this election, and we will define Canada's role based on all the needs that will arise, while most certainly keeping in mind the safety of the Canadian citizens who would be involved in whatever roles are decided upon. Whatever commitment the government makes will certainly take into account participants' safety.

[English]

UKRAINE

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will look forward to the answer to that question. It does not sound like there is one yet.

Given the Prime Minister's interest in elections abroad, I want to move from Iraq to Ukraine. The Ukrainian Canadian Congress has requested 1,500 observers for elections there. People are also asking for an assurance that there will be no Russian intervention.

Has the Prime Minister called in the ambassador of Russia to ensure that elections will be respected, there will be no intervention, and there will be a recognition of a free and fair result?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to inform the leader of the official opposition and this House that, with my colleague, the minister responsible for the Canadian International Development Agency, I have just announced that the Government of Canada will be ready to send up to 500 qualified observers. We have informed the OSCE to ensure that there will be a fair and transparent election.

* * *

THE SENATE

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while that is an advance over Friday's position, it is somewhat less than a number of organizations are suggesting is necessary.

I have asked about Canada's role in Iraq and Ukraine. The Prime Minister sees himself as the grand defender of democracy around the world.

In his crusade to promote democracy, will he commit to recognizing elections in his own country and naming elected senators from Alberta?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister has said, we on this side of the House are committed to meaningful Senate reform. However, we are not committed to ad hoc, piecemeal Senate reform. The Senate is an important part of our Parliament.

Many in this country believe that it is time to look at meaningful reform, which is why the Prime Minister has called upon the premiers, through the Council of the Federation, to think about coming forward with a proposal which we could in turn respond to and work on with them.

* * *

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, documents released at the Arar inquiry reveal a widening credibility gap within the government. During testimony in committee, RCMP Commissioner Zaccardelli has stated that resource allocations within the RCMP are adequate, mirroring repeated claims by the government. Yet, a highly sensitive and censored internal report contradicts the assertion. It states:

If the human resource issue is not addressed we run the risk of jeopardizing the safety of Canada—

Oral Questions

It speaks of chronic resource allocation shortages. Given this risk, when will the Prime Minister take action and put the necessary resources into this department to protect Canadians?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP has received a significant infusion of funds since 1999-2000. In fact, its annual spending authority has increased to more than \$2.8 billion. Budget 2000 announced another \$584 million over three years to help the RCMP's capacity to address public safety threats. I have a long list of additional investments.

Indeed, since September 11, we all understand the importance of our national police force and its ability to work not only within this country, but across borders and—

• (1425)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Central Nova.

* * *

AIR TRANSPORTATION SECURITY

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it appears the lessons of 9/11 have been sadly lost on the government. The disappearance of over 1,000 Canadian air transport security uniforms is proof of that.

In last April's Auditor General's report it was noted that the RCMP identified 16 businesses operating at airports that were linked to criminal activities, facilitating identity fraud, and selling stolen passes. These problems were identified over seven months ago. These items, in the hands of terrorists, represent a real threat to Canada and her allies.

Why was the government so unaware and so ineffective? When will the RCMP be called in to investigate this breach?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had asked for a report and it was given to me this morning. First, it does not talk about 1,127 uniforms, but parts of uniforms ranging from belts to pants and shirts. Strictly speaking, 226 items have the CATSA logo on them including 91 badges, 78 shirts, 32 wind-breakers and 25 sweaters. Nothing had been reported stolen. There are 4,000 employees and each has 20 items of equipment. So employees across the country have at total of 75,000 items of equipment in their homes—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec's agriculture minister received assurances from the Minister of Transport that the federal government will assume 60% of the \$16 million compensation that is required to set a floor price for cull cows. However, according to the federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Ottawa has not even completed its study of the agreement.

Can the Minister of Transport, who is responsible for Quebec, tell us if, indeed, he gave his word to Quebec's agriculture minister and intends to fully respect it?

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my conversation with the agriculture minister lasted exactly one minute and a half. She told me that she had her own program, that she was in the middle of negotiations, and she asked me whether we might be considering the 60-40 agreement that the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food had told her about, for a shorter period of time. However, no formal commitment was made.

What we have is the will to look together at this agreement, which has yet to be finalized. While there is some goodwill, there is definitely no cheque written yet. People have to talk to each other and, of course, this is what the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and his provincial counterpart will do.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in other words, what the minister is telling us is that he never gave these assurances to Quebec's agriculture minister, that she made it up when she spoke publicly on Thursday, spoke to the media and told UPA officials that she had assurances from the federal government, because she had talked to the minister responsible for Quebec.

If I hear the minister correctly, he is saying that she made up the whole thing and that there is nothing true in what she said.

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Not at all, Mr. Speaker. What I told the agriculture minister is that we are prepared to cooperate with them. Indeed, talks will take place in the coming weeks. Of course, the agreement is not even finalized. Obviously, we did not have time, in a minute and a half of conversation, to discuss or negotiate a matter involving an amount of \$18 million. We are much more responsible than that.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister of Transport may be responsible, but after Ms. Gauthier's remarks on Thursday to the effect that he had made, on behalf of the Government of Canada, a commitment to assume 60% of the compensation, would the responsible course of action not be to stand up and denounce the statement he says was inaccurate?

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): You know, Mr. Speaker, that, where federal-provincial relations are concerned, a new tone was adopted in this place, and denouncement is the Bloc Québécois's thing, not ours.

What I did was that, anytime I was asked, I told the journalists that we were very open to a request and that we would consider it. I never said anything, however, about giving assurances about a cheque in this amount. Everyone knows that is plain common sense. Obviously, nothing was negotiated in a minute and a half conversation. Besides, the minister herself does not have the entire agreement. We were talking about possible future negotiations, naturally.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport should be serious for a minute. Quebec's agriculture minister made a statement saying that Ottawa had made a commitment and that she had the transport minister's word.

Oral Questions

Calling himself responsible, the Minister of Transport is not saying anything. Is that responsible? Should the Minister of Transport not have told the public and the minister immediately that it was inaccurate, that his remarks should not have been interpreted that way, instead of letting this go?

• (1430)

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member should know that the interpretation to be given to my remarks is that the federal government is prepared to do everything to improve the situation for all in the mad cow issue.

But we have already accomplished a lot. We will continue to cooperate with the province. Whenever I was asked, I obviously answered that Ottawa was prepared to cooperate, but I never said that an agreement had been signed. The agreement with the slaughterhouse has not even been signed. Therefore, we cannot be negotiating \$18 million in compensation without even knowing what the purchase price is for the slaughter house. Seriously.

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[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence.

Today we learned that the Union of Concerned Scientists along with arms experts and people who know this material inside out are ratifying and confirming what the criticisms of the arms race have been all along. Missile defence is going to increase the buildup of arms globally. It is going to lead to the weaponization of space. It is going to take away from Canada's credibility in arguing for disarmament.

When will the Prime Minister stand up and say that he has heard the evidence, and that Canada will simply say no to missile defence?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is being extremely responsible in this respect. He is negotiating and discussing this matter with our American colleagues to see precisely the issues that the hon. member mentioned.

The Prime Minister will analyze this with our colleagues here in the cabinet. We will bring advice to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister will act in the interests of the security of Canadians and the protection of our sovereignty in the way in which we manage the defence of North America. I am confident that this will be done in the best interests of Canada and Canadians.

Mr. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this waffling and prevarication is really quite astounding. If we go back to the advertisements in the last election, they were very clear.

The Prime Minister tried to claim that all Canadians with progressive values should support him and his party because he would not go down the road that we saw being carved out by the Bush administration. We see precisely the opposite. The Prime Minister is pursuing that road. He is in the middle of discussions.

Can the hon. minister find one progressive Canadian to support this position?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every progressive member of the House supports the position that we should have honest, frank and fruitful discussions with our American allies with whom we have cooperated for the last half century in the defence of North America. That is what the government will do.

We will pursue all avenues and we will make a decision at the end which is in the interests of Canada, and with respect for our allies with whom we will work. That is very progressive.

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AIR TRANSPORTATION SECURITY

Mr. Dave Batters (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

It has recently come to light that there has been a security breach within CATSA, the agency responsible for security screening at our airports. Over 1,100 uniform items have been lost or stolen during the first nine months of this year, including 91 security badges.

How can such a serious breach happen under the watch of CATSA and under the watch of the minister's department? What does the minister have to say to air travellers from Canada and throughout the world who are legitimately concerned about the security of aircraft in our country?

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Well, Mr. Speaker, I read the reports on the weekend. I called in the president of CATSA immediately. He sent me a report this morning. We must realize that most of the items are pants and shirts. When badges are talked about, we are not talking about badges but logos. I cannot show it here.

However, we will ensure that there is more control of the inventory in the future. We are also ensuring that access to airports is double-checked when employees arrive.

Mr. Jim Gouk (British Columbia Southern Interior, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not only is the public at risk over stolen badges, but 110,000 airside pass holders are subject to random checking only. This includes everyone from baggage handlers to window washers.

The minister claims that no pre-clearance security passes can be issued to high frequency business travellers, and yet he wants us to believe that random checking is okay for all levels of workers.

Between stolen badges and workers getting through security with only random checking, how can he claim that his billion dollar security system is working?

• (1435)

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, security has not been breached. There are 4,000 people working for CATSA. One of them, for example, had a fire in his house. He lost some items obviously. We do not have any report that a full uniform, except the burned one, disappeared.

Oral Questions

It happens to every police force. They do not have control over 100% of their shirts, sock, belts or pants. Obviously, CATSA reported that it did not have them anymore and it asked for more because its workers are allowed to have 20 items—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Oxford.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have yet another example of the Liberals jeopardizing our military personnel. Like the submarine acquisition, we set the rules so that only one bid fit the criteria for new army utility vehicles. The G Wagon is less than a year old and is falling apart. Nearly 85% of the vehicles in service have multiple cracks in their floors.

Why do we continually purchase second rate equipment for the first rate men and women of our Canadian Forces?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the G Wagon in question is a first rate piece of equipment. It has developed some cracks in the flooring, this is absolutely true. I have looked at them. I have talked to the operational people in Afghanistan. I have been assured by the military that this has no effect whatsoever on the operational capacity of the vehicle.

We are looking at this issue. However it does not affect the safety of the operation or the ability of the vehicle to do the job it was bought to do. It will continue to do that job with our officers and our men safely in it.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, duct tape will not fix that problem.

Another naval message surfaced this weekend citing significant electrical problems on the *Chicoutimi* during its maiden voyage just hours before the fire occurred. On October 13, 2004, the Minister of Defence stated:

The Canadian navy took all of the necessary precautions and professional measures necessary to determine the seaworthiness of this ship before it set to sea.

Which is it? Was the submarine safe for travel or was this decision made for political expediency, to get this submarine home?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said before in the House, not only were the Canadian naval officers confident the sub was ready to go to sea, the British admiralty as well certified it as ready to go to sea. There were issues involved in testing. There will always be issues on every ship and on every piece of equipment, but I can assure the House that what I have been told by the navy, and the navy knows what is best in this circumstance, is that these were issues that they were capable of managing, that this submarine was in a fit position to go to sea and that it was coming to Canada and any problems that had to be addressed would be done when it was on sea trials in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister continues to blow hot and cold about Canada's possible participation in the missile defence shield. In view of American pressure, the topical nature of this issue, and the public's desire to know where Canada stands, time is of the essence.

Can the government promise to hold a debate and a vote in this House, before Christmas, on the subject of the missile defence shield?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was already announced in the Speech from the Throne that there will be a vote on this issue. The throne speech already plans for a vote in the House of Commons.

The hon. member has spoken of pressure from the United States. Last week, however, the President of the United States used very moderate language when he said he hoped that Canada would join this project. I can assure you that we are not under pressure from the United States. The decision will be made in Canada, and this House will of course have a say in it. The government will make its decision following our discussions with the Americans.

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we want to have a debate before Christmas, since the installation of the missile defence shield could start up the arms race again in some 20 countries at least. Russia and China have already clearly announced that they were prepared to relaunch their own program so that it would remain effective whether or not there is a missile defence shield.

What is the government waiting for to send an unequivocal message that not only does Canada not support the shield, but that the Canadian public wants nothing to do with it?

• (1440)

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, we ought to be careful not to feed misinformation to the public. The United States has already decided to implement the missile defence shield. The American administration has made its decision on this, with the support of a number of countries. We in Canada cannot say what the United States will think is in their own best defence.

The question is whether Canada will participate or not. We have had discussions with the United States. On the question of whether or not there will be a missile defence shield, the United States has already chosen this way to defend itself.

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AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mr. Marc Boulianne (Mégantic—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government remains strangely silent about the future of Bombardier and the construction of its new aircraft. During the election campaign, the government did not hesitate to free up \$500 million for the automobile industry in Ontario. Now that it is Bombardier, the federal government is dragging its feet.

How can the Prime Minister defend such a double standard, doing one thing for the auto industry in Ontario and another for the aerospace industry in Quebec?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are having discussions with Canada's aerospace industry and with Bombardier. We are not going to be talking about it through the media. If that is what the hon. member would like to do, it is not going to happen. We are not negotiating through the media.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Boulianne (Mégantic—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government did not hesitate to free up \$500 million for the auto industry in Ontario, saying, "If you have plans, we are prepared to listen", whereas in Quebec, there has to be a plan before a single penny is made available for aerospace. The situation is urgent. There are only two weeks left before Bombardier decides whether it will build this aircraft here or elsewhere.

When will there be a plan for the aerospace industry?

[English]

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has made a commitment of something like \$1 billion for the manufacturing industry in Canada, including the aerospace industry.

We are talking to Bombardier. We will not be negotiating with a gun to our head. Bombardier is dealing with us and we are dealing with it in good faith.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the present Premier of Quebec stepped aside as federal minister for calling a judge about the status of an Olympic athlete hoping to compete. Michel Dupuy was dumped after phoning the CRTC under his jurisdiction about a broadcast station application. David Collette stepped aside for asking the Immigration and Refugee Board to support a constituent's application.

Why is the immigration minister being allowed to cling to her post in the face of much worse conduct?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister and I have both said in the House, the Ethics Commissioner is investigating this matter. The Ethics Commissioner will issue a report and I would ask all hon. members to wait until we receive that report.

I think it is fair to say that I have said that a number of times in the House. The Prime Minister has said it and others have said it. In fact, the answer is not going to change.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the facts are already very well known. The cases I just cited, plus others, are examples of what used to be a reasonable standard of ethics, even for Liberals.

The immigration minister's conduct represents an even more significant breach. She showed political favouritism to a campaign worker. Her office did not notify authorities when they knew the whereabouts of a deportee under a Canada-wide arrest warrant. Her actions compromise the fairness and integrity of our system.

Why does the Prime Minister continue to condone and defend such actions?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what none of us should condone are the kinds of repetitious unsubstantiated allegations and assertions such as we have just heard.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I sense that there may be some disagreement with the minister's answer but that does not justify trying to shout the minister down. We have to be able to hear the answer. The minister has the floor. If members do not like the answer that they are getting, they should not ask the question.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Well, they would not like it if the Chair ruled a question out of order on the basis that it was going to provoke disorder in the House. We cannot have disorder. We need to have answers. If a question is answered, there has to be order. We are going to get an answer from the Deputy Prime Minister whether we like it or not.

● (1445)

Hon. Anne McLellan: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for that very erudite presentation.

As I have said before in the House, the Ethics Commissioner is investigating this matter. Rather than make unsubstantiated allegations on the floor of the House, let us allow the Ethics Commissioner to do his work. He will report.

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Newton—North Delta, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the immigration minister has defended the preferential visas for strippers by citing their shortage in clubs. However, according to strip club operators, there has never been any shortage of such skills in Canada.

We also know that the senior aide of the immigration minister visited and negotiated with the owner of a Toronto strip club. Political influence on the stripper shortage loophole in smuggling sex trade workers is now evident.

Will the disgraced minister now resign?

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member will know that there is no such program and that my department offered labour market opinion. I gave an indication last week that HRSD would no longer be providing a blanket opinion. The matter is closed.

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, about the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, we have heard the minister's excuse about compassion. We have seen her ruse of the Ethics Commissioner. What seems clear is that a specialty loophole was used for exotic clubs because of inside political access. Nearly all of the dancers came from just one country, revealing that there was a special deal.

She has been the minister for a full year and yet it took the human resources minister to shut it down. Why did the minister defend the program for so long when thousands of desperate cases of people in real need have been waiting for years?

Oral Questions

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member has already heard the answer on many occasions. The minister made her decision and has referred the decision to an independent officer of the House, the Ethics Commissioner. The opposition has also referred the matter to the Ethics Commissioner.

Perhaps opposition members would like to get an answer from the Ethics Commissioner before they jump to a conclusion.

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VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we all know, today is the 15th anniversary of the massacre at École Polytechnique in Montreal where 14 young women were murdered in a senseless act of brutality. As we also learned so soon after the events of that day, they were targeted because they were women.

My question is for the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. Since that terrible event, what has the government done to take action on the matter of violence against women?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know I speak for all women and men in the House when I say that the events of that day were profoundly tragic and must never be forgotten. Parliament has made December 6 a National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women in order to raise awareness and encourage Canadians to take action in their families and in their communities.

The Government of Canada is committed to preventing violence against women through our national crime prevention strategy, programs to combat hate and promote understanding and by measures to prevent gun violence. The government is committed to promoting a culture of safety that combats violence—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Churchill.

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AIR TRANSPORTATION SECURITY

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Friday it was discovered that over 1,100 CATSA security items and almost 100 security shields have gone missing. To our surprise, a VP at CATSA told the CBC that the missing uniforms were not much of a concern. Instead of getting us into star wars, the government should be working on real security issues.

September 11 was not caused by ballistic missiles. It was caused by 19 men with box cutters who bypassed airport security. How can the minister support the perception of security by throwing good money after bad when it comes to CATSA?

● (1450)

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must tell the hon. member that as soon as we were advised that these items were missing, security was tightened. I asked the president of the agency to tighten security even further.

However, the reality is that ID cards are proof of identity and allow airport access. These ID cards are issued by Transport Canada. ID cards are checked when employees enter the airport and again at various times during their shift, to ensure the cards are properly displayed.

Consequently, airport access depends on the ID card, not just the uniform. Consequently, security was not at risk, but we will—

The Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Minister of Transport. The hon. member for Churchill.

[English]

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, air travellers have been paying for security, including those badges and pieces of uniforms that the minister says are not important. It is looking like amateur hour at the agency created to ensure security of the aircraft over Canada.

How does the minister justify throwing money at an agency meant to keep Canadians safe from terrorist attacks when the agency cannot even keep track of its uniforms? How does he plan to get the uniforms back? Will he go on eBay?

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must say that if we could give an answer like this, it is because they kept track of all the items.

What everyone has to realize is that CATSA is doing a very good job. As a matter of fact, a lot of people are complaining that it is doing too good a job because it is at every airport. It is checking every piece of luggage and every passenger that goes through all 89 airports in the country.

CATSA is doing a great job. I do not want the member to undermine the security of Canadians because we have the most secure transportation system that we can have.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian businesses and workers are getting hammered by the quick rise in the Canadian dollar. We know that many international factors cause the rise in the dollar, but we also know that lower taxes are a big part of the solution. Frankly, the 3¢ premium cut for EI just will not cut it. In fact, it is an insult.

Why is the government not aggressively cutting taxes as a way to deal with the quick rise in the Canadian dollar?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member will appreciate that one cannot comment on the level of the Canadian dollar. We have a floating exchange rate, and neither the government nor the Bank of Canada has any particular target.

That having been said, it is true that the dollar does represent one of the downside risks to Canada's high economic growth. This underlines the need for the government to remain fiscally prudent to ensure that we stay constantly in the black.

Oral Questions

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of comment on how the Liberals are running the government. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the Governor of the Bank of Canada have both made it clear that the Liberal government's policies are hurting Canada's economy.

In a recent poll, nine out of ten Canadian business leaders delivered the same message. They stated that the Liberal government's policies of higher taxes, over-regulation and no investment in infrastructure were killing Canada's productivity.

Will the minister commit that he will accelerate capital tax reduction and cut personal taxes to boost Canada's economy?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is committed, first and foremost, to implementing what was in the platform of the last election campaign. Health care, support for communities and child care remain the top priorities of the government.

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UKRAINE

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, hundreds of thousands continue to stand in the streets of Kiev waiting to have an honest vote. The Ukrainian Canadian Congress is calling for an absolute minimum of 1,500 monitors from Canada. The Liberals have offered little but threats of sanctions. Ukraine needs solutions, not Canadian sanctions.

Will the Prime Minister commit to appoint an unbiased parliamentarian for Ukraine with the resources to send sufficient Canadian monitors for the very crucial election on December 26?

Hon. Aileen Carroll (Minister of International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I cannot conceive how the hon. member could fail to understand how important our announcement was today. We are sending up to 500 monitors, up to a cost of \$3.5 million, the largest number of monitors of anyone in the international community. We are calling upon Canadians who wish to go to register with CANADEM to be a part of a very important exercise in transparent democracy.

* * *

● (1455)

IRAQ

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has ignored the situation in Iraq and abandoned its obligations to the Iraqi people in order that they might enjoy the same democracy as Canadians do. Now the government has decided to send unarmed Canadian men and women to oversee elections in a place that is constantly under fire by insurgents.

My question is for the Prime Minister. What is the government going to do to guarantee the safety of the Canadians he is sending into this international hotbed?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a government that has contributed substantially to the reconstruction of Iraq already. This is a government that is investing \$300 million in the reconstruction of Iraq. We have already disbursed \$250 million. We are training Iraqi police in Jordan, contributing to the security of that country. We are doing our share as

a member of the international community. I know very well that those people might have made another decision, but I can tell members that our approach reflects Canadian values and Canadian interests.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a man from my riding, Nicolas Royer, has disappeared in Peru under dramatic circumstances. Mountain rescue specialists from Valcartier have indicated their willingness to take part in the search operation as volunteers.

I am therefore asking the Minister of National Defence whether he plans to authorize these military personnel to take leave in order to go and volunteer in the search?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we do of course have the greatest sympathy for Mr. Royer's family. We, along with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, will be looking at how we could assist with the search operations and with getting Mr. Royer back home. We are working closely together on this and will have a look at all the possibilities for trying to locate Mr. Royer. As for the matter of sending military personnel at this time, that is a rather complicated matter, but we are going to look into that possibility. We will be working with the family and with Canadian authorities in order to try to help the Royer family resolve this terrible problem.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this family is in urgent need of help.

I also want to know, did the Minister of Foreign Affairs make special provisions with the Government of Peru so that these military personnel could clear Peruvian customs with their specialized equipment without any problem?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first I want to say that we understand the enormous stress the family and friends of Nicolas Royer are under. This is an extremely difficult situation and our thoughts and support are with them.

Our ambassador in Lima and her staff, as well as my officials here in Ottawa, are working around the clock to coordinate search efforts with the Peruvian authorities.

I want to point out that Hydro-Québec has contributed a helicopter, which began searching this morning over this particularly rugged terrain.

[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, any political interference with the police or the criminal justice system, whether real or perceived, is absolutely wrong. Yet that is what the former prime minister allegedly did; interfere with a parole board decision regarding his son.

Does the Prime Minister condone this type of political interference or will he stand in the House and condemn it?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously, our criminal justice system has to be one of independence, objectivity and impartiality.

Let me reassure all members of the House that as it relates to the Parole Board and, for example, the selection of those who serve on the Parole Board, there is a rigorous, pre-selection testing and screening process conducted by the Parole Board itself. It does not involve any participation on the part of the government or any individual minister.

Let me also reassure everyone in the House that I personally take very seriously the objectivity—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Fundy Royal.

Mr. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that did not answer the question. All Canadians deserve to be treated equally before the law. Yet this outrageous interference for special treatment is all too typical of Liberal governments, past and present. To this day, who a person knows in the PMO remains more important than the merits of their case.

Once again, does the Prime Minister condemn or condone those actions?

• (1500)

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I love the way those people make these sweeping allegations. Other countries, some of which were mentioned here on the floor of the House today, look to this country as an example of integrity, an example of how we establish government structures and run a government and a country of integrity and objectivity that serves its citizens well.

As I have just said, the parole board is independent, it is objective and I demand that—

The Speaker: The hon. member for York South—Weston.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, vehicle emissions from passenger vehicles are increasing at an alarming rate. In its 2002 climate change plan for Canada, the government committed to reducing passenger vehicle emissions by negotiating with automobile manufacturers vehicle emission standards that would reduce greenhouse gases by 25% to be achieved by 2010.

Oral Questions

Could the Minister of Natural Resources inform the House on the progress his department, along with counterparts in Transport, has made in moving toward the goal of a 25% greenhouse gas emission reduction in passenger vehicle emissions?

Hon. R. John Efford (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is an important question for the future of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

My colleague, the Minister of the Environment, and I met with the auto industry in the month of November. We made it very clear to the auto industry that we wanted a reduction of 25% on a voluntary basis by 2010. Since that time, the industry has come back with a letter. We will be meeting with it again in the very near future.

We are very confident that we will reach the agreement of a 25% reduction by 2010, which will be far ahead of the State of California, which has been bragging about—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington.

* * *

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for more than a week now a Canadian citizen from Victoriaville has been lost in the Andes in Peru. The parents and friends of Nicolas Royer cannot wait any longer.

Can the Minister of Foreign Affairs tell us what he intends to do to help Mr. Royer and his family?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member from the opposition for his question. As I have just said in this House, we greatly sympathize with the family and the immense stress they must be under right now.

Our ambassador in Lima is in constant contact with the Peruvian authorities, who have done excellent work in terms of the search. I also want to point out Hydro-Québec's contribution of a helicopter, which has been taking part in the search efforts since this morning.

We wish all the best to everyone involved in the operation on this dangerous terrain.

* * *

[English]

YOUTH

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board offended anti-ageism provisions in the Charter of Rights when he hurled insults at young people's participation in the democratic process in committee last week. This is no way to encourage young people to participate more fully in our democracy.

Will the minister rise in the House and apologize to young people everywhere for offending their charter right to participate in the democratic process?

Points of Order

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is true that on Thursday I did make reference to a situation that occurred in committee, something that I spoke about in the House on numerous occasions. It was about how we had turned committee into question period and how inexperienced members, when they came to the House, did not have a sense of how committees worked.

In saying that, I did make a reference to the age of the hon. member, for which I immediately apologized, and went on with the explanation, which is well documented by Professor Ned Franks. It is something we should pay attention to so we can get on with the business of government.

* * *

[Translation]

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, the Gomery commission learned that the government had decided to use its discretion in determining which documents it would provide to the commission. We must not forget that, shortly before the election, the Prime Minister had begged anyone with information about the sponsorship scandal to make it public.

How can the government justify the fact that the clerk of the Privy Council advised Justice Gomery that the government would provide only the documents it considers relevant, when the Prime Minister made a public commitment to doing the complete opposite?

• (1505)

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the commitment was to make available to the Gomery commission all documents that were pertaining to the sponsorship issue. In fact, some documents refer to multiple public policy issues. As such, it is entirely appropriate for the government to take from those documents only those items or phrases that pertain specifically to the sponsorship issue and make those available to the Gomery commission. That was done. These issues will be debated from time to time between counsel and resolved in the Gomery commission. Let Justice Gomery do—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

* * *

FORESTRY

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. In 2000 the brown spruce longhorn beetle was detected in the Halifax region. CFIA has been working to eradicate the pest, and a quarantine zone has been established.

Hurricane Juan turned this problem into a disaster for woodlot owners and residents whose wood is losing value and causing a fire hazard with no recourse to get their wood out. Many are seeing their financial future destroyed. Other members from Halifax West and from Sackville—Eastern Shore, with whom I have discussed this on numerous occasions, are aware of this issue and share my concern.

What is being done to help landowners to get—

The Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food (Rural Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour and the consistent and forceful work that he has put into this issue for constituents in that area.

We recognize that it is causing hardship. CFIA is working with landowners in as speedy a way as possible to try to salvage the value of the timber and at the same time ensure that the pest does not go further throughout the woods in the province.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of several Science and Engineering Research Canada, or as they are more commonly known, NSERC Award recipients.

Dr. John Smol is this year's winner of Canada's top science award, the Gerhard Herzberg Canada Gold Medal for Science. This award recognizes Dr. Smol for his outstanding and sustained efforts in bringing paleo-limnology to world attention.

Dr. Geoffrey Ozin and Dr. Sajeev John are the first winners of The Brockhouse Canada Prize for Interdisciplinary Research in Science and Engineering. They are being recognized for their breakthrough research in the synthesis of light-trapping crystals that could be key to the future development of optical computers.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: The hon. member for Churchill is rising on a point of order arising out of question period.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in his response to my question regarding missing security items, the transport minister implied that I was creating a security problem by bringing the issue to the attention of the House, while in his response he also, and I would hope inadvertently, misled Parliament by saying that every item going through the airports is checked. We know from non-confidential studies that this is not the case. I would appreciate it if he would take the time to correct the record on both counts.

The Speaker: I am not sure that this is a point of order, but I see the Minister of Transport is rising to deal with the matter so we will hear from him.

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure the House. I do not want travellers to be worried about these missing uniforms. This is why I made it very clear that this incident will have no effect at all on passengers and airport security. We have one of the world's safest system. People must recognize that, under our system, every passenger and his or her luggage is checked. Therefore, I am very proud of the security system.

I do not want to attribute any motives to the hon. member. We all have the right to discuss this issue here. However, I want to reassure travellers and Canadians. Our airport security system is one of the world's safest.

* * *

[English]

PRIVILEGE

COMMENTS OF MINISTER OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION—
SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on November 22, 2004 by the hon. member for Central Nova concerning remarks made by the hon. Minister of Citizenship and Immigration which the hon. member for Central Nova claimed deliberately misled the House and damaged his reputation.

I would like to thank the hon. member for Central Nova for having raised this question as well as the hon. government House leader and the hon. Minister of Citizenship and Immigration for their contributions on the issue.

The hon. member for Central Nova alleged that in answering a question during oral question period on Friday, November 19, 2004, the hon. Minister of Citizenship and Immigration clearly implied that he had improperly sought to obtain a minister's permit for a visitor's visa on behalf of a student from India.

The words of the hon. minister, as reported in the *Debates* of November 19, 2004, at page 1603, were as follows:

The deputy leader of the Conservative Party requested a permit a couple of weeks after the election for a personal friend. I have since learned that the hon. member's personal friend was a former Conservative candidate and has been a big political contributor to the Conservative Party. I guess I should have asked, did he work on the campaign?

The hon. member for Central Nova maintained that the minister had incorrectly asserted that his action was taken as a favour for a personal friend who was also a financial contributor to his party. The hon. member further charged that the hon. minister had implied that this person had worked on his election campaign. These allegations, he felt, were an attempt to intimidate him and other members of the official opposition and so impede them in their questioning of the minister's own actions. As well, he felt that the allegation that he had acted improperly constituted a deliberate attempt to tarnish his reputation.

The hon. member for Central Nova, while acknowledging that he had intervened to assist in obtaining the minister's permit, contested the minister's interpretation. He stated that while he was acquainted with the person who had approached him seeking the permit, that

Speaker's Ruling

person was no more than an acquaintance. He further stated that neither that person, nor the person for whom the permit was sought, had ever worked on his campaign.

In replying to these charges on Wednesday, November 24, 2004, the hon. Minister of Citizenship and Immigration denied that she had deliberately misled the House and presented a clarification of the remarks to which the hon. member for Central Nova had objected.

She pointed out that in her reply to the question asked on November 19, she had not stated that anyone had worked on the electoral campaign of the member for Central Nova but had posed a question. She stated in the *Debates* of November 24, 2004, at page 1819:

By asking a rhetorical question, my intention was to demonstrate that the process was not influenced by politics. I was attempting to illustrate that I judged each case based on its merits, no matter which member brought it forward to my attention. It is not a question of fact, but of misunderstanding.

She went on to claim that staff in her office had been left with the clear impression that the person on whose behalf the hon. member for Central Nova was intervening was the member's friend.

There are, I think, two points at issue here: first, whether the hon. Minister of Citizenship and Immigration made remarks in the House which she knew to be false; and second, whether she deliberately made those remarks with a view to intimidating members of the official opposition and in an attempt to tarnish the reputation of the hon. member for Central Nova. These are very serious charges and this case merits the close attention of all members.

Both my predecessors and I have on many occasions reminded the House of the importance of ensuring that accurate information forms the basis of exchanges made in our proceedings. Furthermore, not only must members refrain from remarks which they know to be false, they must also ensure that in speaking of one another they do so with respect, maintaining that level of civility required by our practice and expected by all Canadians.

● (1510)

[Translation]

In this regard the book entitled *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* states, on page 522, that:

Remarks directed specifically at another Member which question that Member's integrity, honesty or character are not in order.

[English]

In the present case, the parties involved have given very different characterizations of the situation and have provided to the House their explanations as to how they arrived at the positions they hold. The hon. minister has spoken of a "misunderstanding". Whether that is the case or whether we are simply faced with two different interpretations of events is not up to the Speaker to determine. Disagreements about facts and how the facts should be interpreted form the basis of debate in this place.

Routine Proceedings

I would caution all hon. members that, especially in the heat of debate or during the vigorous exchanges that characterize question period, there is a danger they will be so caught up in the moment that they may phrase their remarks in ways that can best be described as unfortunate. I believe this is what has occurred in the present case. Members have been provided with explanations of how the parties have arrived at their competing views and so they may draw their own conclusions.

I do not think it is for the Chair to conclude that the issue before us is, rather than a matter of privilege, a dispute about facts. I would urge all hon. members to use prudence in choosing their words in order to avoid this kind of argument being raised in the future.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1515)

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the pleasure to table, in both official languages, two copies of the report entitled, "Making Choices".

[English]

It is the annual report of the Chief of the Defence Staff 2003-04.

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CANADA SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on October 20, following a question from the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, I committed to report back to the House on the investigation undertaken by the Canada School of Public Service on the process resulting in the award of two contracts to the Lemmex Group. I have the pleasure today of tabling the result, in both official languages.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development entitled, "Bill C-15, an act to amend the

Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994 and the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999".

[English]

In accordance with the order of reference of Tuesday, November 2, Mr. Speaker, your committee has considered and held hearings on the subject matter of Bill C-15, an act to amend the Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994, and the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, and agreed to it on Thursday, December 2, 2004.

I beg all members to look at the committee's report, particularly with respect to the oil spill that has occurred off the east coast. The bill attempts to deal with those kinds of issues as they affect maritime law and to bring our legislation into conformity with international legislation.

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates. The committee has studied the supplementary estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005, and has agreed to report them unamended.

* * *

PETITIONS

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting over 1,200 petitions from constituents very concerned with the plight of national defence in this country.

The petitioners, in noting the Auditor General's findings, the Conference of Defence Associations, and the Council for Canadian Security in the 21st Century, basically request that the government support the existing level of operational activity, that it conduct the war on terrorism and homeland defence and that it solve the problems of chronic underfunding and overtasking which has led to personnel, equipment, training and sustainability shortfalls. For the sake of our national defence, the petitioners request more funding.

FISHERIES

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present a petition which includes the signatures of over 20 native commercial fishermen from Alert Bay in British Columbia.

The petitioners are calling on the government to conduct a judicial inquiry into the disappearance of over two million sockeye in the Fraser River this past summer. These fishermen are alarmed and fully expect that in 2008 there will be no opportunities for them to earn a livelihood. They want answers as to what happened. They would like a judicial inquiry into what went on this summer.

• (1520)

MARRIAGE

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present in the House this afternoon. It is a pleasure to do so.

Government Orders

The first comes from constituents of my riding of Prince George—Peace River, specifically from the small northern community of Pink Mountain.

The petitioners wish to draw to the attention of the House that marriage is the best foundation for families and the raising of children. They note that marriage has always been between a man and a woman, yet it is being challenged in the Supreme Court.

The petitioners further note that marriage is the exclusive jurisdiction of Parliament. Therefore they wish to see the government 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.

CANADIAN FORCES HOUSING AGENCY

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): My second petition, Mr. Speaker, is from citizens of Lethbridge, Alberta. It is on a subject near and dear to my heart, and on which I have presented many petitions already in this Parliament.

The Canadian Forces Housing Agency does provide on base housing for some of our military families. However in many cases that housing is substandard to acceptable living conditions and is subject to annual rent increases.

Therefore the petitioners from Lethbridge call upon Parliament to immediately suspend any future rent increases for accommodation provided by the Canadian Forces Housing Agency until such time as the Government of Canada makes substantive improvements to the living conditions of housing which it provides for our military families.

* * *

[Translation]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, question No. 21 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 21—**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:**

What is the projected level of government funding of TRIUMF, Canada's National Laboratory for Particle and Nuclear Physics, for the 2005 to 2010 period?

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, National Research Council of Canada responds that the current annual contribution to the TRIUMF operating budget from the National Research Council of Canada, NRC is \$40 million. The future levels of this contribution are under review in the context of the government's review of TRIUMF's next five year plan.

[Translation]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I suggest that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: The question mentioned by the hon. parliamentary secretary has been answered.

The hon. member for Delta—Richmond East, on a point of order.

[English]

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just last week I mentioned that Questions Nos. 5 and 6 had not been answered and I still have not had a response to them.

Today I would like to point out that I am still waiting for an answer to Question No. 7. Mr. Speaker you should know that I first asked the question on September 24, 2003. I asked it again on February 2, 2004 and then again on October 5, 2004.

I know from access to information that the questions were answered. I know as well from access to information that one of the respondents to these questions was ordered to rewrite the response to put it in a more positive light.

These order paper questions are to be answered in a straightforward, honest and forthright manner. I am concerned that one, I am not getting the answer, but two, I am not getting a straight answer.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, surely the member for Delta—Richmond East would not suggest that the government would provide answers other than straight answers.

If he has not understood that questions posed in a previous Parliament may have expired when Parliament was dissolved are brought back in this Parliament. The member was nice enough to resubmit the question. If he has done it twice, then obviously he has had a lot practice at it.

The government will be very happy to provide the answer in the required time. Perhaps if he finds access to information as a faster mechanism to get his answers, then he need not clutter up the order paper.

The Speaker: I do not want to get into a debate on the matter, but the hon. member for Delta—Richmond East has raised a point. If he knows an answer was prepared and it has not been brought to the House, I do not understand why it cannot be done expeditiously. I am sure that the parliamentary secretary will want to see that it is done, and of course that it is the usual straight answer, none of this nonsense.

Is it agreed that the remaining questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

●(1525)

[English]

TLICHU LAND CLAIMS AND SELF-GOVERNMENT ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-14, an act to give effect to a land claims and self-government agreement among the Tlicho, the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Government of Canada, to make related amendments to the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed.

Government Orders

The Speaker: Before question period the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre had the floor. There are five minutes remaining in the time allotted for his remarks.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will use these last five minutes to summarize the views of the NDP caucus with regard to Bill C-14 and, in our view, to celebrate the emancipation of the Tlicho people as they, by this bill, come out from under the Indian Act which we believe resulted in nothing more than 130 years of social tragedy across the country.

Before question period I was pointing out that the Tlicho, under this agreement, will now hold complete surface and subsurface resource rights, full hunting and trapping rights, and control over renewable and non-renewable resource harvesting. This, more than anything else, is the worthy aspect of this document.

Finally the very people who prospered for thousands of years on their traditional territory will have the direction and control over the resources on that traditional territory. It was a misguided century that denied them that right. It is our opportunity by this action to remedy that historic injustice that denied them access to their own land, resources and renewable and non-renewable resources.

Let me say as well that democracy is alive and well in the Tlicho First Nation. There is no democratic deficit in the Tlicho First Nation as we might find here in Ottawa at times. The agreement in principle between the Tlicho and the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Government of Canada was reached in the year 2000 and was later approved by 80% of the 1,843 Tlicho voters in June 2003. In that referendum they wanted to be so abundantly sure that it was a democratic vote that any uncast ballots were counted as no votes. Even with that extra-superdemocracy, they still achieved 80% of the 1,843 eligible votes who voted yes on the agreement in principle. I thought that was noteworthy.

In the last few moments that I have I would like to talk about what I think are perhaps the most innovative aspects of the agreement. They are the provisions for Tlicho self-government and the right to strike and enforce laws through a traditional Dene justice system.

The former prime minister who signed the document on behalf of the Government of Canada stressed that the agreement will serve as a model for other indigenous communities and other countries. We approve of that, provided it is not viewed as a template or a cookie cutter approach. We believe all first nations have the right to negotiate their own terms and conditions. He added, "It defines rights and shows the world how diversity creates strength and how partnerships build success and is a model for implementing self-government". That is a quote from the Right Hon. Jean Chrétien.

Among the 700 people witnessing the signing of the agreement was Tlicho elder Mary Ann Jermemick'ca, who travelled from Wha Ti mostly by canoe. Her quote upon witnessing the signing of this historic agreement was:

We were always told what to do and what we couldn't do. We could have somebody doing mining...right next to our house and we have nothing to say about it. Now at least we have some say about what's going on in our community and our land.

This agreement recognizes the Tlicho authority and self-governing ability to collect taxes, to levy resource royalties, to regulate aspects

of their lives, from fishing to family law, to the licensing of native healers. However, contrary to the misconceptions perpetrated by those who I believe were raising mischief associated with this bill, federal and territorial governments continue to maintain health, education, housing and social assistance programs at the same level as elsewhere in the Northwest Territories. Also, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms remains in full force and effect and cannot be superseded.

Perhaps the most notable facet of the Tlicho agreement is not what it is, but rather, what it is not. It is not a conventional treaty. Largely 19th century artifacts, these treaties from the European and Euro-Canadian point of view often signalled an end to hostilities or were put in place for a specific European purpose, not for the well-being of the other party of the treaty, which is the aboriginal and first nations people.

The Tlicho Dene have lived from time immemorial in the region of the Northwest Territories that came to be bisected by two such treaties, treaty 8 in 1899, and treaty 11 in 1921, which split the Tlicho territory arbitrarily, denying them access to traditional territories and control of their own region.

The reason these treaties were struck was largely the direct result of events. In the case of treaty 8, it was the 1898 gold rush. This treaty was hurriedly forced into effect to look after the interests of people who wanted access to the gold fields, not the well-being of the first nations communities that they interrupted. Treaty 11, which came along in 1921, followed the oil strike at Norman Wells, Northwest Territories in 1920.

• (1530)

In a very hurried way the government had to quickly throw a treaty together to essentially make peace with the indigenous people in that area, so that it could access and harvest the very resources that sat under the feet of the original peoples. These traditional treaties were marred and tainted, as it were, as being very one-sided and self-serving.

Mr. Ken Epp (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the member of Parliament, on a non-partisan basis, for his great interest and the large amount of work that he has devoted to issues that have to do with natives and with the various challenges that they face.

One of the things that comes to my mind, when I hear him and others speak in support of this bill, is the fact that there continue to be new treaties and new arrangements that are made for land settlements with the natives. Would he explain to us the benefit of having all of these individual agreements as opposed to having a master agreement which would treat everyone equally?

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, all modern day treaties, and I mean by that the Nisga'a treaty, the comprehensive claims regarding the Inuvialuit western Arctic agreement and others like the Cree-Naskapi agreement, were individually custom crafted to meet the individual specific realities of the first nations people and the environment that they were dealing with. There is no one single cookie-cutter approach that would do justice to the many legitimate claims out there.

Government Orders

One of the things we caution about this agreement and any of the modern day treaties is that they should not be viewed as templates. They should not be viewed as some boiler plate that we can put in place and then impose on other first nations.

I sympathize with the member's tone and the content of the member's question that this is a tedious, expensive and sometimes cumbersome process. It could be expedited however were there a willingness on the side of the federal government to actually conclude agreements rather than prolong these lengthy negotiations because the stumbling block has been on the government's side.

We have seen movement and negotiation in good faith on the side of the first nations in virtually every application, but we have not heard the minister say to his bureaucrats, or to his negotiators, to go out and conclude agreements. We have heard him say, figuratively if not literally, to go out there, delay and stall, and do not even recognize Supreme Court rulings in their determinations at the bargaining table.

We have a situation where most negotiating tables are frustrated, prolonged and terribly costly. I can give examples to my colleague from Edmonton of negotiating tables where the first nations, in order to continue negotiating, have to borrow money for all the legal expertise that they need, sometimes tens of millions of dollars, and then in the end, 20, 30 or 50 years down the road, when they finally conclude a settlement, they have to pay back all the money they had to borrow to continue bargaining.

Were the government or, frankly, successive federal governments truly interested in resolving these outstanding claims, they would have gone to the negotiating table with a political will and with a mandate to conclude settlements and negotiations. We believe economic development could have prospered and flowed into those areas of Canada much sooner.

I lived in Yukon when the entire territory was all under land claims. I wanted to buy my first home because I was starting a family. I wanted to build my first house as a carpenter. My son was born in Dawson City. We could not get a lot anywhere in the whole territory because the entire territory was frozen because of pending land claims. This was all through the 1970s and the 1980s. I had to stake a mining claim and build a cabin on the mining claim because I could not get a simple titled lot anywhere.

Economic development is being held back throughout Canada because of pending negotiations. It is the stubbornness and the unwillingness on the part of the federal government, not just this federal government but the previous one as well, that is stopping the conclusion of some of these protracted and exhausting negotiations.

● (1535)

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to support and acknowledge my colleague from Winnipeg Centre and his comments. Indeed, it is a day to acknowledge and celebrate the movement on this.

I come from a part of the country where the speed on negotiations has been glacial at best. It is also an example of where the cookie-cutter, template approach would not work. There is very little Crown land in my area.

Could my colleague specifically comment on elements of this particular agreement that would serve as a model to hasten these protracted negotiations that are disadvantageous to our aboriginal communities?

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, that is a very timely question. We know that economic development and social progress is being held back by the stubborn refusal to conclude land claims.

There was a pivotal study on the subject of economic development in first nations by Stephen Cornell, from Harvard University, who studied first nations and their degree of development all over North America. He found, without any fear of contradiction, that there was an inexorable link between the level of economic development and the level of self-governance and self-determination of a first nation.

In other words, the only successful models of economic development are those communities that have achieved a certain amount of self-governance and self-determination, and virtually open-ended. This is not simply access to resources. This is the socio and cultural mindset that comes with being a free people, free to conduct their own affairs and self-determination. That is when progress blossoms.

Signing the Tlicho agreement 82 years to the day after the political forebearers had signed Treaty 11, former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien captured the emotion and the meaning of the moment with the following words. He said, "This is the glory of Canada where we can be what we are and at the same time be part of a greater Canada".

In my view, as we pass Bill C-14 today, we are strengthening Confederation. We are not giving anything away. We are building a stronger country with the partnership of the Tlicho First Nation.

● (1540)

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as have previous speakers, I wish to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of many individuals from the Tlicho community, individuals who have negotiated—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): If I may, earlier this afternoon we were very tolerant when some members, out of enthusiasm, made sure to introduce us to different persons in the galleries. May I remind hon. members that only the Speaker may underline the presence of people in the galleries.

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my fellow committee members who worked so diligently in reviewing Bill C-14, the Tlicho land claims and self-government act. Their thoroughness throughout the process has given this very important bill the careful consideration that it merits.

Not only would this landmark bill enact the first agreement to combine land claims and self-government in the Northwest Territories, but it would also give the Tlicho access to the tools needed to build prosperous and sustainable communities. Enacting this legislation would benefit not only the Tlicho but also the people of Canada. After all, strong, self-reliant first nations, Inuit, Métis, and northerners, have much to contribute to Canada, both economically and culturally.

Government Orders

Under Bill C-14 and the agreement that the bill would enshrine, the Tlicho would gain control of a vast area of land, 39,000 square kilometres in size. The legislation would ensure that the Tlicho play a significant role in the management of land, water and other resources within their territory. The Tlicho would also receive a payment of approximately \$152 million over the next 14 years.

While the bill would grant the Tlicho substantial land, money and power, it would also give them the significant responsibilities of self-government and would put them firmly in control of their economy, their culture and their communities. I believe the Tlicho have demonstrated most amply that they are ready for momentous responsibilities and know how to manage their affairs conscientiously and profitably. As was mentioned earlier, this is one of the more prosperous and successful aboriginal communities in the north. They already operate their own schools, senior's residence and day care centre. They have negotiated successful agreements with a number of public and private sector organizations. They deliver social services through an agreement with the Government of the Northwest Territories.

Under the terms of Bill C-14, the Tlicho would be represented by two elected governments. The Tlicho government would gain greater control over social services and schools and would be able to enact laws in areas such as aboriginal language and aboriginal culture. They would also be guaranteed representation on land, water and renewable resource boards.

The Tlicho community governments in each of the four Tlicho communities, Wati, Gameti, Wekweeti and Behchoko, would oversee activities such as business licensing, roads and zoning.

In addition, for the first time, non-Tlicho citizens residing in Tlicho communities would be able to run for office, vote in community elections and work to safeguard their own interests. However only Tlicho citizens would be able to run for and vote for chief. This level of self-government ensures that key decisions will be made by the people most familiar with and most affected by local issues. It also ensures that Tlicho governments will be established and maintained within the democratic and constitutional framework of Canada. It will respect Canadian law and recognize that the Tlicho, like all Canadians, are subject to federal laws and subject to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The Tlicho have prepared to implement this agreement for many years, for it has been signed after more than a decade of negotiations among the Tlicho and the Governments of Canada and the Northwest Territories.

● (1545)

This agreement has already been ratified by the territorial legislature in Yellowknife and by the Tlicho. Furthermore, a comprehensive implementation plan is ready and the Tlicho have already drafted and ratified a constitution.

Prior to finalizing the agreement, the Tlicho people took it upon themselves to negotiate overlap agreements with their aboriginal neighbours. These agreements have not only helped to clarify the boundaries of traditional lands, but have also improved relationships among aboriginal peoples in Canada's north.

Through the lengthy consultative process, the Tlicho have shown us the power of democracy in action. I believe such an open and fair process can only bode well for the self-government structure that the Tlicho will put into place and inspire other aboriginal groups to similar achievements.

Surely the fact that the Tlicho are one of the most progressive aboriginal groups in Canada is linked to their consultative and collaborative abilities, their careful consideration of every voice, their willingness to accept dissent but still achieve consensus.

Today the Tlicho operate numerous joint ventures in a range of economic sectors. They have developed a run of the river hydroelectric generating facility and built and maintain their own airport. The Snare Cascades generating plant was made possible by an agreement between the Tlicho and the territorial power utility.

The Tlicho have also signed a number of mutually beneficial agreements with private sector firms in the mining sector. For example, more than five years ago an impact benefit agreement was negotiated with BHP Billiton, owners of the Ekati diamond mine.

A second agreement was subsequently negotiated with owners of the Diavik mine. A partnership between a Tlicho owned firm and SNC Lavalin recently received a prestigious engineering award for work at the Diavik mine site.

The importance of mining in the Northwest Territories should not be underestimated. The mutually beneficial partnerships negotiated among aboriginal and non-aboriginal companies have delivered a wealth of economic and social benefits, including job and training opportunities for Tlicho people and contracts for aboriginal firms.

Indeed, aboriginal employment in the mining sector has risen swiftly. Today numerous aboriginal businesses operate in the sector and generate \$500 million in annual revenues.

Revenues from partnerships with diamond mining companies have been invested in Tlicho communities, in youth groups, in sports programs, in beautification projects and in physical infrastructure. Money has also been used to support traditional activities in which Tlicho people of all ages fish and hunt together and renew their laudable age old connection to the land that now provides new opportunities.

The impact that the Tlicho's economic activity has had on Canadian prosperity is significant. Stable, self-reliant aboriginal communities are able to participate fully in the national economy. Now the Tlicho want to strike a new deal with the people of Canada, a deal that will put them more firmly in control of their destiny. In the words of Tlicho chief negotiator John B. Zoe, it "recognizes our ability...to pass on those rights to future generations".

The legislation before us today carries the principled and worthy aspirations of a people and provides a road map for other first nations, Inuit, Métis and northerners to follow. I hope I can count on the support of my hon. colleagues to help us move the legislation through to the Senate for final approval and give the Tlicho people the tools they need to build the future that they deserve and desire.

Government Orders

•(1550)

Mr. Ken Epp (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a very succinct question for the member opposite.

One of the dangers of having these treaties negotiated one at a time is that those who are negotiating now can use previous ones, if not as a template at least as a guide, but later on when there are other agreements negotiated perhaps some new elements are brought in which then are not available to those whose negotiations have already been completed.

I wonder whether he sees any danger in the fact that the different groups will now have different contracts, shall we say, with the government in order to conclude these agreements which differ substantially and which could be construed as treating different classes of Canadians unequally.

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand: Mr. Speaker, I will provide a succinct answer. As I indicated, the Tlicho people have negotiated very much in good faith. What we have now on the floor of the House is a comprehensive, far-sighted agreement that will benefit the Tlicho community. I have no doubt but that other communities that will enter into negotiations with the federal government will be equally far-sighted, will negotiate equally in good faith, and any agreements that emanate from future negotiations will in fact be representative of good faith negotiations.

Mr. Jeremy Harrison (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is a diligent member of the aboriginal affairs committee.

The question I would like to ask is a question that I had asked the minister this morning but one to which I did not receive an answer. Perhaps the hon. member could enlighten me with regard to articles 7.1 through 8.2 of the agreement which deal with international agreements.

We learned in committee from the counsel for the Tlicho people that this particular provision was included at the request of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. We also found out that it was in conflict with the actual cabinet document that guided the negotiations for this agreement. I was wondering if the hon. member could perhaps tell me why DFAIT insisted upon the inclusion of this particular article in the agreement.

•(1555)

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand: Mr. Speaker, as I, hopefully, have demonstrated and others at the committee level, the hon. member across the aisle who has asked the question was likewise a diligent, responsible member of the committee that we were privileged to serve on.

As the minister of state indicated in response to the member's question earlier today, the duty to consult will by no means bind the federal government. The Tlicho people have not been provided with a veto with respect to international issues or international negotiations. There is simply, in my respectful view, an ongoing good faith negotiating process that will continue. When the rights of Tlicho peoples or their lands are in any way part of international negotiations, then the federal government will see fit to consult with

them but not be bound by the result of any such discussions or consultations.

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am certainly not an expert on this agreement so I rely on advice from the government spokesperson.

I read the Auditor General's report about the gap between aboriginal youth on our reserves in Canada and the non-aboriginal community. From the way I read it, the gap is getting wider, not closer. Obviously, one way of improving the lives of first nations people, long term, medium term and the short term, is through education. It is very discouraging to see the gap getting worse, not better.

We can all talk about objectives and where we want to go, but obviously we have not done that in this area. The system has failed aboriginal people. The Auditor General's report confirmed that whole aspect.

What does the treaty do for the educational needs of aboriginal people in the territories? Are specifics in the agreement to ensure that objectives are met rather than just stated. Could the member enlighten me on what is innovative or different about the treaty in the delivery of educational services to aboriginal people?

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand: Mr. Speaker, to its credit, the Tlicho community is a relatively prosperous, well educated and advanced aboriginal community.

Comparisons can be a bit disingenuous in the area of education. How do we quantify one system with respect to another?

The federal government puts \$1.2 billion annually into the education of aboriginal youth. Today's aboriginal youth is receiving a better education than his or her peer did five or ten years ago. While aboriginal education is improving, I will concede that it is improving incrementally and not as quickly as the government would like to see. Steps are being taken to ensure that the education of aboriginal youths improves at a faster rate than it has in the recent past.

•(1600)

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise, on behalf of the constituents of Fleetwood—Port Kells, to participate in the third reading debate on Bill C-14, the Tlicho lands claims and self-government act.

The proposed bill gives effect to the Tlicho land claims, the self-government agreement and the Tlicho tax treatment agreement. It amends the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act and makes consequential amendments to a number of other acts. It ratifies the Tlicho agreement signed August 25, 2003, between the Tlicho and the Governments of Canada and the Northwest Territories that arose out of 12 years of negotiations.

The Tlicho, formerly the Dogrib First Nation, is one of the five tribes of the Dene people and has about 3,000 members. Band members ratified the treaty with a vote in June 2003. Of the eligible Tlicho voters, 83% supported the agreement. The agreement was approved in spring 2003 by the executive council of the government of the Northwest Territories. In August 2003 it was signed by former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien and Grand Chief Joe Rabesca.

Government Orders

Bill C-14 would give the Tlicho First Nation ownership of approximately 39,000 square kilometres of land between Great Slave Lake and Great Bear Lake, an area almost the size of Switzerland. The band would have the rights to both the surface and mineral resources of this land. The Tlicho would receive 2% of revenues from three existing diamond mines, but the entire royalties from any future mining or oil and gas activity within the newly created region would go to the band. In addition to resource management, the band would be given power over areas such as traditional medicine, language and culture.

The Northwest Territories, the federal government and the Tlicho will co-deliver systems for education, health and other social services for the first 10 years the agreement is in effect. Criminal law still falls under federal domain. Once the Tlicho government has been established, it will succeed the Dogrib Treaty 11 Council, the four local band councils and municipal governments.

Four community governments will be made up of a chief and a council of between 4 and 12 councillors. The chief of a community government and at least half of the council must be Tlicho. Non-Tlicho citizens may fill no more than half of the council seats. The chiefs and some of the councillors will form the government to oversee the area.

The preamble of Bill C-14 refers to the Tlicho as being "an aboriginal people of Canada that has used and occupied lands in and adjacent to the Northwest Territories from time immemorial". The agreement is stated to be a land claims agreement within the meaning of section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. Bill C-14 states that in the event of conflict between the agreement or this act and other legislation, the regulations made under this act will prevail. Under the agreement, Tlicho laws will not displace federal or territorial laws but will be concurrent.

Clause 7 of the bill directs the Canadian government to meet the financial obligations of the agreement, which gives the band \$152 million over 15 years. The government will make a one time only payment of \$5 million to an economic development fund established by the Tlicho government, the strategic economic development investment fund. The band will also receive a share of the government's annual resource royalties from the Mackenzie Valley, which are expected to average about \$3.5 million.

Bill C-14 also would give effect to the Tlicho tax treatment agreement. Under the bill, it is not considered a treaty or land claim agreement within the meaning of section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. It is an agreement dealing with the tax treatment of the Tlicho government, Tlicho capital trusts and Tlicho corporations. The Tlicho government would given tax collection powers and those taxes would be used to support Tlicho programs and services. The Tlicho government would be tax exempt in its government activities.

The proposed bill gives the Wekeezhii Renewable Resources Board the legal capacity, rights, powers and privileges of a person. The purpose of this board is to perform the functions of wildlife and habitat management as set out in the agreement. It will be made up of an odd number of people, not more than nine, including representatives from other aboriginal groups whose wildlife harvesting occurs in Wekeezhii, the Tlicho resource management area. The agreement gives the Tlicho full hunting and trapping rights.

• (1605)

The bill makes significant amendments to the Mackenzie Valley Resources Management Act to reflect the new status given the Tlicho through this agreement. Tlicho rights related to resource management are given the same footing as those of other first nations that already have resource management boards under this Act.

Bill C-14 also makes consequential amendments to other legislation: Access to Information Act, Canada Land Surveys Act, Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, Northwest Territories Act, Payment in Lieu of Taxes Act and the Privacy Act. The Payment in Lieu of Taxes Act would be amended to include the Tlicho government under the definition of "taxing authority".

It should be noted that although the agreement states that Tlicho citizens are no longer subject to the Indian Act, it is not stated in Bill C-14.

Bill C-14 is unique in that it ratifies both land claims and self-government agreements. This agreement will serve to set precedent for all future such agreements for as many as 600 first nations. Unfortunately, however, as I outlined during debate on this legislation at second reading, the bill seriously flawed.

The agreement lacks the basis requirement for all treaties or agreements: that of finality. It contains a clause that could reopen negotiations should future aboriginal settlements be reached in the Northwest Territories. In short, this agreement fails to achieve a final settlement. Also the agreement recognizes the right of the Tlicho under certain circumstances to enter into international agreements and to force the Government of Canada to consult with the Tlicho before entering into certain international treaties.

This is an encroachment of the federal government's ability to make decisions for the country, and it will affect Canada's international autonomy. Specifically, the agreement requires the Government of Canada to consult with the Tlicho before entering into any international agreement that may affect the right of the Tlicho Government, the Tlicho First Nation or a Tlicho citizen. This is broad language and a remarkable restriction on a power constitutionally reserved for the federal government.

The agreement would effectively create a third order of government which authority would be paramount to that of the federal and the territorial governments in certain matters. The jurisdictional confusion created by this new level of government is compounded by the fact that the wording of the agreement is not clear as to which legislation, federal, territorial, Tlicho or the charter, is paramount in the event of conflict with the Tlicho Constitution.

Self-government must occur within the context of the Constitution of Canada. To ensure fairness and equality, the principles of the charter must apply to aboriginal self-government.

Time is wasting. The slowness at which negotiations have been undertaken to further define aboriginal rights to land and resources is a disgrace.

Government Orders

Canada is one of the richest countries in the world. Yet our aboriginal people live in third world conditions. The plight of first nations is a painful embarrassment to Canada. The life expectancy of registered Indians is seven to eight years shorter than the national average. Suicide rates are twice the national average. Aboriginal peoples have an average income 75% less than the national average. Unemployment rates are 10 times the national average. School drop-out rates are higher and educational attainment is lower than that of any other ethnic group.

First nation reserves are rife with violence, physical and sexual abuse and suicide. Unhealthy living conditions and over-crowded housing with insufficient heating and inadequate water supplies are all too often a fact of life. First nation people are caught in a cycle of dependency and poverty.

The federal government annually spends some \$7 billion on aboriginal peoples, yet their living conditions fail to improve. This is completely unacceptable. For those first nations currently lacking settlement of aboriginal title, there is the hope that an agreement may bring greater prosperity. The government should undertake measures to improve the employment and health situation of aboriginal people and to speed up negotiations on aboriginal land claims.

•(1610)

B.C. has over 68,000 status Indians representing 17% of all status Indians living in Canada. While there are no precise figures on the exact percentage of land in dispute, one report by the Fraser Institute suggests that 95% of the land mass in British Columbia may be in dispute. British Columbia's first nations deserve a timely resolution to their comprehensive land claims.

The Conservative Party supports a settlement for the Tlicho land claim and negotiations for a self-government agreement, but this agreement is poorly drafted and deeply flawed. Our concern is the future governance of Canada and the precedent that is being set.

It is an extraordinarily generous settlement. There are 632 first nations at the negotiating table. Are they all after the same bundle of powers? If they are, we will have a very different version of Canada than most Canadian citizens currently understand. While I am for the uplift of the first nations people and a speedy settlement of their claims, the agreement reached must be fair.

Hon. Sue Barnes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with interest to this member's speech. I have listened to members of her party make various presentations on this bill over the last number of weeks. I know that concerns are generally felt in that party; they are all the same.

I would like to ask this member to explain what concerns she has with paramountcy of laws and jurisdictional conflict in this piece of legislation. I would like her to explain the constitutionally protected rights that she seems to have problems with.

The answers have been given on this side of the House. Three parties around the chamber all agree. All the legal opinions that have been put forward by witnesses agree with the opinions of the government, the Tlicho and the territorial government, the tripartite opinions. What is it that this member does not understand?

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Mr. Speaker, my party and I support the settlement of land claims. I would like this done quickly and fairly for all Canadians.

Let us look at our first nations. They are living in poverty and very poor conditions. Their unemployment rate is high and health care is poor. There is no education. There is no infrastructure on the reserves, the rate of violence is high, and so many are suffering from substance abuse.

This government has done nothing. We want something done fairly and quickly for our first nations.

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all understand that there are problems throughout Canadian society. The specific question here is that objections are being made to Bill C-14 because it is said that jurisdiction is being transferred in circumstances which are inappropriate. As the hon. member who preceded me said, we have legal opinions that say this is in accordance with the charter of Canada. We strongly believe that by transferring jurisdictions appropriately we enable people to get on with their lives. We enable people to exercise control over their own lives and become full members of society.

It would be helpful for us on this side of the House if the members opposite could tell us clearly what areas of jurisdiction being transferred they think are improper. Then we can properly answer the objections they have.

•(1615)

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Mr. Speaker, all we hear from that side is talk, talk, talk. The government has done nothing for our first nations and our party wants this settlement of land claims to be done quickly and fairly. That is what we want.

Mr. Jeremy Harrison (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak at third reading of Bill C-14, the Tlicho treaty. Bill C-14 ratifies the Tlicho agreement signed on August 25, 2003, between the Tlicho people and the Governments of the Northwest Territories, Canada and the Tlicho.

The bill would give the Tlicho First Nation ownership of 39,000 square kilometres between Great Slave Lake and Great Bear Lake, located in the Northwest Territories.

The bill is unique in that it gives effect to both a comprehensive land claims settlement and a self-government agreement.

The agreement is precedent setting in both respects and will guide future claims settlements and self-government provisions across the north. This agreement is a culmination of two separate negotiations.

Government Orders

First, the negotiation of the comprehensive claim has been carried out pursuant to the 1986 comprehensive claims policy, and in this respect the agreement is similar to the Nisga'a agreement.

Second, the negotiation of the self-government arrangements are based upon the 1995 inherent rights policy, and in this respect the agreement follows the path of the Westbank treaty.

It should also be noted that the bill gives force of law to the tripartite agreement of August 25, 2003, and accords the agreement paramountcy over the act itself. In other words, the approval of the act will bring into law the very complex provisions set out in the 208 page settlement agreement and the shorter tax agreement and will in essence incorporate the 208 page agreement into the Constitution of Canada through section 35.

In general terms, the agreement gives the 3,500 Tlicho people claims to subsurface resources, law-making authority, and the power to tax, levy royalties and manage resources on the 39,000 square kilometres of land laid out in the agreement. The Tlicho lands are bounded in the north by the Sahtu agreement, on the east by Nunavut, and on the south and to the west by the future Akaitcho and Deh Cho territories.

The Indian Act no longer applies to Tlicho citizens and Tlicho lands are no longer to be considered reserve lands. In terms of governance, the agreement creates four local governments consisting of a chief and council. The agreement provides that the chief must be Tlicho and further that 50% of the community council must be Tlicho citizens.

The Tlicho government consists of a grand chief elected at large by Tlicho citizens, the chief from each of the community governments and one councillor from each of the community governments. The Tlicho government has the power to enact laws in relation to things such as the use of Tlicho language and culture, traditional medicine, resources, and businesses and occupations on Tlicho land as well as taxation and enforcement powers.

When I first spoke on Bill C-14 during second reading, I pointed out a number of areas that I had concerns with. These concerns centred around a few specific issues, namely, the absence of finality in the agreement, problems with sections relating to the interrelationship of Canadian and international sovereignty and provisions of the agreement, and jurisdictional confusion within the agreement.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, I serve on the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. Indeed, I serve as the vice-chair. I sincerely had hoped that once we had Bill C-14 at the committee perhaps some of the concerns enunciated during second reading debate could be alleviated. Unfortunately, they were not.

Regarding concerns about the absence of finality in the agreement, I pointed to article 27.6.1 of the agreement. The article reads, under the heading "Agreements for Equivalent Benefits", as follows:

Where government provides, in legislation or in or under a land claims agreement or a self-government agreement, tax powers or exemptions to another aboriginal group in the Northwest Territories that are of greater benefit to that group than those provided to the Tlicho First Nation or the Tlicho Government...at the request of the Tlicho Government, will negotiate and make best efforts to reach an agreement with the Tlicho Government to provide equivalent benefits for the Tlicho First Nation...

In other words, this agreement can be reopened if greater benefits are conferred upon another group in later negotiations or if the Supreme Court or other court of competent jurisdiction discovers new tax benefit rights for particular groups of first nations in the Northwest Territories.

The second area that my party and I expressed our concerns about during second reading debate and in committee is with regard to the issues of jurisdictional confusion within the agreement and between the agreement and powers granted the federal government by the Constitution Act in 1982.

Without getting into great detail on the subject, I will refer hon. members to the second reading debate in which members of my party very eloquently and clearly laid out their concerns on this issue.

Broadly speaking, the agreement addresses inter-jurisdictional issues in three different areas and lays out potentially problematic hierarchies of authority. The general intent of the legislative scheme is that the powers of the Tlicho government are to be concurrent with those of the Government of Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories.

The problem is that there are multiple definitions of how to determine paramountcy in the event of conflict. The one area that I believe should be highlighted in this area is the hierarchy of authority as laid out in articles 7.7.2 through to 7.7.4.

● (1620)

These sections provide for the following hierarchy of authority: one, federal legislation of general application; two, territorial legislation implementing Canadian international agreements; three, Tlicho laws; four, territorial legislation of general application; and five, specific federal legislation relating to the Tlicho.

In other words, Tlicho laws prevail over territorial laws and over federal laws relating to the Tlicho, specific federal laws. Hence, after the passage of Bill C-14, the House will no longer have the constitutional jurisdiction to pass laws of specific application relating to the 39,000 square kilometre area described in the agreement.

A third area that I have very specific concerns with, and about which I worked hard in committee to extract answers from the government and the INAC bureaucracy, is with regard to article 7.13.2 of the agreement. This provision reads as follows:

Prior to consenting to be bound by an international treaty that may affect a right of the Tlicho Government, the Tlicho First Nation or a Tlicho Citizen, flowing from the Agreement, the Government of Canada shall provide an opportunity for the Tlicho Government to make its views known with respect to the international treaty either separately or through a forum.

At this point, I would like to make clear that I intend to split my time with the hon. member for Blackstrap.

As the Hansard record of the Bill C-14 committee hearing will bear witness to, I pressed very hard to get some answers as to what this provision would mean in practice and what the rationale was for including it in the agreement in the first place. I have further pressed on this today in the chamber during debate. I have asked the minister. Again we have had no answer to this question.

Government Orders

As to what the provision would mean in practice, I have some very serious concerns. The government itself does not seem to know what the provision means. My fear is that when it comes time for this section to be judicially interpreted, and that time will come, given the jurisprudential direction of the Canadian courts on these issues we will find ourselves in a situation whereby our nation's ability to enter into international treaties and agreements will be compromised; that we will in fact have given a de facto veto over our international sovereignty on certain issues to the Tlicho government.

To be blunt, this is a ridiculous state of affairs. The impression I have is that the government and bureaucracy have not fully thought through the implications of this section.

Even more strange, we discovered during questioning in committee that this section was included not at the insistence of the Tlicho negotiators but at the direction of the Department of Foreign Affairs. Why was it included? We did not get a straight answer.

Today we came into possession of the cabinet framework document governing this negotiation, from back in 1995, a document that was accepted by cabinet in 1995 and which made it very clear that there was not to be any abdication of Canadian international sovereignty in the process of negotiating these agreements. That does not seem to have been followed with this treaty.

For these reasons I have enumerated, I will not be supporting this agreement. My party has also made clear the reasons that our party will not be supporting this agreement. I thank hon. members for their time and their attention.

• (1625)

Mr. Ken Epp (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague for his work on the committee as vice-chair and as one who is very much involved with it.

I was interested in the fact that he raised the issue of having to deal with different groups within the water boundaries of our country on a sort of country-to-country basis, setting these people up as individual nations. If Bill C-14 passes, does he anticipate that we will have delegations to these different nations? Will we have ambassadors there? How will we actually manage the intergovernmental affairs vis-à-vis these individual groups as compared to the provinces and territories that we have now?

Mr. Jeremy Harrison: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Tlicho people and the Tlicho negotiators on the work they have done. They obviously did a good job.

The issues our party have are not with the Tlicho people. Our issues are with the agreement that the government negotiated and the concessions that were made. The Tlicho negotiators did a good job.

With regard to the member's question, we do run the risk of creating a situation where we would have a patchwork of legal regimes across the country, particularly a patchwork of legal regimes in the Northwest Territories. It was made clear by my colleague from Calgary Centre-North this morning, and we have seen it just recently in the government report on smart regulations, that the situation in the Northwest Territories is confusing right now for all involved.

Before we can move forward on the construction of the Mackenzie Valley pipeline, 2,000 approvals are needed.

We do run the risk of having overlapping and confusing jurisdictional areas, and that is a very legitimate concern.

Hon. Sue Barnes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the three parties came together, all three parties had very knowledgeable negotiators. The three parties worked very hard and they all agreed. How would the hon. member separate the parties from their agreement?

When the member says that he supports the Tlicho people but not what was ratified in the agreement, that gives me cause for concern. I do not think I am the only one who does not understand this distinction. I think the Tlicho people would have a problem understanding why the member thinks the agreement they ratified so well is not acceptable to them. They did not negotiate this agreement without knowledge or without an understanding of what they wanted. They signed on to the agreement and ratified it in very great numbers.

How does the member make that distinction?

• (1630)

Mr. Jeremy Harrison: Mr. Speaker, we have a problem with the government putting a provision in the agreement that could literally sign away our ability to enter into international agreements and its refusal to answer why it was put there in the first place. I asked the minister this question this morning. I asked this question numerous times in committee. We have not received an answer. Why is this provision in the agreement? What is the answer? Why would this have been included at the request of DFAIT

This provision could hamper the ability of this country to enter into international agreements. We have not received an answer as to why that provision is in there. The government insisted upon it. Government members have been asking why we take issue with the government's negotiating position, that is an example of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Kootenay—Columbia, Canada Border Services Agency; the hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George, forestry industry; and the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, the environment.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to Bill C-14, the Tlicho treaty. The bill is important to Canadians for many reasons but particularly for the precedent it sets for other groups seeking land claim settlements and/or the power to self-govern.

It is necessary and right to be fair in such negotiating agreements, but it is also necessary to be accountable and to be practical. That is the only one way to ensure that the rights of all Canadians are respected and considered.

Government Orders

Bill C-14 would fix in law the Tlicho land claims and self-government agreement made more than a year ago between the federal government, the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Tlicho First Nation.

Ownership of land between Great Slave Lake and Great Bear Lake, about 39,000 square kilometres, would be transferred to the Tlicho First Nation and participatory regulatory authority would be given for an even larger area. This land agreement is combined with provisions for self-government.

To be clear, under Bill C-14 the Indian Act would no longer apply to Tlicho citizens and Tlicho lands would not be considered reserve lands. Tlicho citizens would have continued access to all federal programs for status and non-status Indians and Métis, and the Criminal Code would continue to apply.

It seems the Charter of Rights and Freedoms would apply to the Tlicho government. However, even though the Tlicho constitution is intended to be consistent with the charter, it is in law the paramount authority.

The agreement does state that the citizens or persons to whom Tlicho laws apply will have rights and freedoms “no less than those set out in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms”.

I have a number of concerns about this agreement. For example, the preamble to the annotated agreement states:

Whereas the Parties have negotiated this Agreement in order to define and provide certainty in respect of rights of the Tlicho relating to land, resources and self-government...

This agreement provides neither definition nor certainty to a number of issues. It contains a clause to reopen negotiations if another Northwest Territories aboriginal group negotiates terms that are attractive to the Tlicho in a future agreement. It fails to do its most basic job: achieve a final settlement.

Looking to the future, there are literally hundreds of other native groups that could seek similar agreements. If none of these arrangements are finalized, it puts Canada in a position of confusion and uncertainty.

This is also an issue of particular concern and interest in my home province of Saskatchewan where natives make up an ever increasing portion of its population. By not limiting the authority of the Tlicho to enter into “international, national, interprovincial and inter-territorial agreements”, it appears the agreement recognizes the right of the Tlicho to enter into international agreements.

In addition, it puts the onus on the Government of Canada to consult with the Tlicho First Nation before Canada enters into an international agreement that “may affect a right of the Tlicho government, the Tlicho First Nation or a Tlicho citizen”. I am concerned about this very broad, vague language and how it constrains power constitutionally reserved for the federal government. By allowing this, the Canadian government would, in essence, be compromising its own sovereignty.

In a country where we already have a bloated administration, I do not believe additional levels of government are necessary or desirable. Yet that seems to be what is created in this agreement.

There is jurisdictional confusion in that the agreement describes three different hierarchies to determine which legislation is paramount in the event of conflict: federal legislation, territorial legislation, Tlicho laws or the agreement.

We must also consider that it is not clear that Tlicho citizens will have the benefits of protection under Canada's Charter of Rights in the event of conflict with the Tlicho constitution. This is the kind of clarification that I would have like to have seen come out of committee discussion so that we could avoid the future intervention of the courts, which will likely come about if this bill passes and the agreement comes into effect.

Self-government is a serious issue and it must be considered in a thoughtful way. When a country is divided into essentially sovereign groups, it affects not only the group in question but all Canadians.

I would like to quote from an author who wrote *First Nations? Second Thoughts*. Mr. Flanagan wrote that he holds certain core beliefs, including the following:

Society is a spontaneous order that emerges from the choices of individual human beings. The indispensable role of government is to make and enforce rules of conduct that allow society to function.... When government sorts people into categories with different legal rights, especially when those categories are based on immutable characteristics such as race and sex, it interferes with the social processes based on free association.

The Tlicho agreement does in fact divide people by race, even within the population it affects.

● (1635)

The agreement creates a category of citizens called Tlicho citizens who are the only people who may be elected as chiefs. Further, 50% of the elected councillors must be Tlicho citizens.

This racially based governance goes against fundamental Canadian values and would likely not withstand a Charter of Rights challenge, that is if the charter was not negated by Tlicho law. Again, the uncertainty is tremendous and I cannot in good conscience allow myself to support the bill.

Any other outstanding claims for land and self-government must be pursued on the basis of a clear framework which balances the rights of aboriginal claimants with those of this country. Such a framework does not exist in the context of the Tlicho agreement.

* * *

WAYS AND MEANS

NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 83(1) I wish to table a notice of ways and means motion respecting an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 23, 2004, as well as explanatory notes.

[*Translation*]

I ask that an order of the day be designated for consideration of this motion.

Government Orders

[English]

TLICHO LAND CLAIMS AND SELF-GOVERNMENT ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-14, an act to give effect to a land claims and self-government agreement among the Tlicho, the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Government of Canada, to make related amendments to the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Jeremy Harrison (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Blackstrap for her intervention on this subject. I know this is an area in which she has a great deal of interest and on which she spoke very eloquently.

My question for the hon. member has to do with the international component of this agreement, which she touched on in her speech and which has been an issue we have spoken about today in the House.

A cabinet document about 70 pages long has come into our possession, a document that was approved by cabinet. We read in the document the direction in which the federal government would be going in the negotiation of treaties. This document made it very clear that there was to be no provisions in any agreement that would be negotiated by the federal government. There would be nothing to do with Canada's international sovereignty or commitments. However this was not followed. It was included in the agreement in violation of the cabinet's own approved policy on the issue.

I must say that this particular provision is very worrisome. I pointed out a couple of reasons in my speech as to why I think it is worrisome. I have asked members of the government whether there had been any jurisprudence on the issue in the past or whether it was an unprecedented provision in that treaty. It is an unprecedented provision. The provision, I believe, could lead to some serious consequences for this country, particularly considering the jurisprudential direction that we have seen the courts move in on these issues. I would like to have the hon. member for Blackstrap add her comments to those I just made.

• (1640)

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Mr. Speaker, there is cause for concern. I sit on the status of women committee. Last Thursday many groups came forward and talked about how the government had failed the aboriginal people. The Métis people have come forward. They have not been recognized. They were concerned about the government and how it had not even acknowledged some of their problems. This has been ongoing for over 10 years. They have been recognized as a peoples, but they are not treated as Métis people.

As these women spoke, I wondered what the government had done for the aboriginal women in the Tlicho agreement. I had asked the minister, who said that we did not have to worry about it, that it would take care of this. However, according to the aboriginal groups that spoke to the committee last week, the government failed miserably. It has not helped the Métis people to be recognized nor has it helped with violence against women. In the Amnesty International report about violence against women, the government has not even paid its bill on that agreement.

That is my concern when it comes to any of this because of the government's record and past history in these agreements. The people themselves wonder if the government will come clean with what this agreement means to aboriginal women and to aboriginals as a whole. Will they have a conclusive agreement? It is important that it be conclusive.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the constituency I represented before the boundaries changed included eight Indian reserves. I believe people from every one of those reserves came to me often to express their concerns on two areas.

The first area was about elections on reserves. Often they pointed to instances where the elections had been improperly held. Even during a federal election, improprieties happened on two of the reserves. In fact the deputy returning officer for the area was called in because of some gross improprieties. Thankfully, they were fixed. However, a common problem is elections on reserves.

Another area where there have been some serious problems in the past is accountability of spending. Again, so often groups of women come to me to say that the money is not being spent properly and they ask what they can do about it, desperate for some real accountability on reserves.

I would like to ask the member this. Does the legislation appropriately deal with the issue of fair elections and accountability if spending on reserve?

Hon. Sue Barnes: The answer is yes.

• (1645)

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Mr. Speaker, the member across says yes. Of course, they agree that they are. I again have to refer to history, and history tells us that these things probably are not addressed.

We just went through a real schmozzle in Saskatchewan again with a Métis election. They are asking the federal government to intervene. By the past actions of the government, it has not dealt well with that. Going back over 100 years, it has been unable to do some of the simple things like fair elections and accountability. The province of Saskatchewan probably has example after example.

Again, I sat as a member on the status of women committee. We can ask the aboriginal groups have come forward. The parliamentary secretary has suggested that the agreement is well thought out and will serve the people well. I invite her to come to the status of women committee to listen to the women who would challenge her greatly. They have asked about their status. A royal commission studied this 10 years ago. They have asked why that has never been implemented? They have asked how the government has addressed the Amnesty International report on violence against aboriginal women?

Just by its mere history, it will tell us that I do not think there is much hope that accountability or fair elections will be addressed.

Government Orders

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that it gives me a great deal of pleasure to address this bill today, but I am sorry I cannot. I am troubled by the bill. It is deeply perplexing. The bill in a sense is probably one of the first of over 600 bills which will be like this.

Before I embark on a critique of the bill and the problems that I see in it, I want to lay before the House the Conservative Party position on these issues because it is important. Our position on these bills is reasonable and shows an understanding of the problems that face native people in the country. If the positions we have taken were followed in the document we are debating today, there would be a glimmer of hope.

The Conservative Party of Canada believes that self-government must occur within the Constitution of Canada. That is an important point and one which I will address later in my speech.

We believe that the settlement of all outstanding comprehensive claims must be pursued on the basis of a clear framework that balances the rights of aboriginal claimants with those of Canada, and I might add with Canadians. The Supreme Court itself has stated that in any agreement reached with native people there has to be an understanding that others have acquired rights and there has to be a balance between the aboriginal right and the rights of other Canadians. I do not see that in the bill.

The Conservative Party believes that self-government agreements must be structured to ensure constitutional harmony so as not to impede the overall governance of Canada, which is another point that I will address more fully later.

To ensure fairness and equality, a Conservative government would ensure that the principles of the charter applied to aboriginal self-government, which is almost an impossibility as the House will see.

The Conservative Party believes in giving aboriginal governments the power to raise their own revenues. Aboriginal agreements reached with the federal government must represent a final agreement in the same manner as was achieved in Nisga'a. Let me correct that. Aboriginal agreements reached with the federal government must represent a final agreement, and I will stop there.

We are told the agreement is a culmination of two separate negotiations. The first was the negotiation of a comprehensive claim, which has been carried out pursuant to the 1986 comprehensive claims policy. In this respect, the agreement is similar to the Nisga'a agreement. Secondly, the negotiation of self-government arrangements are based upon the 1995 inherent right policy. In this respect, the agreement follows the Westbank agreement.

Before I go on with my comments, I want to bring to the attention of the House something that I think is critically wrong with the process that we are engaged in today. The bill and the agreement are being put before Parliament on an all or nothing basis. We are told that the government has received advice that Parliament lacks the capacity to amend the provisions of the agreement. It is for this reason that the legislation was introduced by way of a notice of ways and means motion on October 19.

To suggest that the agreement is beyond the capacity of Parliament to amend is a serious flaw in the process. Who negotiated

the agreement? Who and what authority was given those negotiators? That is not clear. I am not aware of it. I do not know and I do not think there is a member in the House right now who could tell us who the individuals were that negotiated the agreement, what relationship they had with the area under discussion and what relationship they may or may not have had with the native bands involved prior to the negotiations. Who are they?

In my own riding, the Tsawwassen agreement will be coming forward for signing shortly. The negotiators are not familiar with my community. They regularly ignore the wishes of the local community, the Delta Council and others. They are just grey bureaucrats.

● (1650)

These grey and unseen bureaucrats have negotiated an agreement which in a sense is binding on all of us. Today we are either going to accept the total package or reject it. We have no right to say that we like a part of it, but ask people to go back to the table to some changes because this or that aspect of it may be unworkable. That is what we should be doing. We are here to represent the people of Canada, yet we do not have a say. Who gave the instructions and who detailed and told the negotiators what was on the table?

We are told that there are 39,000 square kilometres of land. That is half the size of New Brunswick. To put it in a way that people in British Columbia understand, that is 25% larger than Vancouver Island, and 3,000 people are involved. What were the instructions? Was the negotiator prepared to give away 60,000 square kilometres of land if the demand had been made? Nobody knows and in fact there are conflicting demands for the land.

That is a serious problem with the whole process. When these sorts of agreements come before the House, the House should debate them thoroughly, especially these first agreements, and establish guidelines that can give some direction to negotiators in these agreements and to negotiations that are ongoing. Instead, we are here to rubber stamp it, and we know that will happen. The government members will rubber stamp the bill and others, because they do not want to cause any kerfuffle, will agree with this as well. Many may do it thinking that this is the best way to go.

I do not. I oppose the legislation and I do so for a variety of reasons.

In the first instance, the bill lacks finality. In agreements signed in days gone by, the language was at the end of the bill: cede, release and surrender. In other words, the band which received its reserve lands and its governance, whatever way or nature that may have taken, signed off and said that it ceded, released and surrendered any further claims. That is not the way this bill goes. In fact, this is not the final draft.

If another band gets more, these folks can come back to the table and demand more. In other words, we are committing the Government of Canada, and Canadians, to continue this process for decades because there will be no end. There will always be that juggling to try to get a little more.

Government Orders

If anybody wonders how that works, just think back in British Columbia, for example, and the teachers' negotiations. Board A would come in and would be in negotiations. The smaller board would sit back, let the other guys go first and see what happened. Everybody would wait for the wealthy board to sign off, and it would become the benchmark. Everybody else then tried to reach it.

I guess that is collective bargaining rights, but does it really work? Does it deal with the marketplace in any way, shape or form? No. Yet that is what we face when the language is not final. All it means is that some day down the line, when somebody else comes up with a better deal, there will be a request to reopen the negotiations.

I mentioned in the beginning that there were two areas from which this agreement flowed, or two separate sets of negotiations, one being based on the 1995 inherent rights policy of the Liberal government.

• (1655)

This is a policy which has not really had the benefit of the scrutiny of Parliament. It is a policy which was created by the government but was not openly debated in this place. In fact, when the first bill that was negotiated on this came through this House last fall, the government tried to rush this thing through in one day. When it did return, there was not much in the way of discussion to really create an understanding of what was meant by this bill. That is the problem with everything that seems to be going on here.

What does this inherent right policy mean? How is it going to impact not only the governance in native lands but on other Canadians living in that particular area covered by the treaty?

Let us back up for a minute and put the notion of inherent right into perspective. Section 91 of the Constitution, if my memory serves me correct, lists the powers of the federal government. Section 92 lists all the powers of the provincial government.

The Constitution says quite clearly that there are no other powers available. The powers that are vested in the provincial government and in the federal government cover the spectrum of powers that are available. There is no room in the Constitution for other powers. Some may ask about municipal government, where does it fit in?

Municipal governments are a delegated form of government. Their authority flows from the provincial government. The provincial government gives municipalities certain powers which actually belong to it. It says these are local powers. These powers are better managed by local government than they are from Victoria, in the case of British Columbia, or from Edmonton, in the case of Alberta, to mention two of the finer provinces.

If the federal government takes all its powers from section 91, the province takes all its powers from section 92, and municipal governments derive their powers or operate with a delegated form of authority from the provincial government, where then does this inherent right power flow from?

When the government recognizes inherent right to self-government, it is saying that right flows from section 35 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In other words, the inherent right to self-government is not one which is delegated by either the federal or provincial government, but in fact it has equal footing. It flows from

section 35 of the of the charter and that gives it the ability to trump federal or provincial law. It is as simple as that. This is not complex. This is simple stuff that is quite easy to understand for anyone who takes the time to think it through. How then does the charter apply? Government would tell us that the charter will apply. But how can it?

• (1700)

If the Tlicho government were operating because it has an inherent right, how then can we say that the charter would apply? That is an intrusion on the inherent authority of the Tlicho government. Therefore, it will likely be rejected in the courts.

The court will say, how on one hand can it be said that these folks have an inherent right to self-government and on the other hand say that they are constrained by the charter? It does not follow. It cannot be had both ways. We cannot say they have an inherent right and then at the same time turn around and say that their rights are constrained.

In fact, if we look at Bill C-14, it recognizes that very point. The bill says and contains this remarkable section relating to international matters. In article 2.2.9 of the agreement, it states:

Nothing in the Agreement shall be interpreted so as to limit or extend the authority of the Parties to negotiate and enter into international, national, interprovincial, and interterritorial agreements—

By implication this suggests that the Tlicho government has the authority to enter into international agreements.

In fact, if that authority does not exist in that manner, the Government of Canada is required to consult with the Tlicho when international treaties are going to impact on them. That is clear from reading the agreement. If an international agreement is going to impact on the Tlicho people, then they have a right to be consulted and to have their concerns addressed. However, how far does it go? That is not clearly defined.

Will the Tlicho people have the right to veto an agreement because it somehow impinges on their right? I think the whole issue is very confusing. However, the very broad language that is contained in this treaty puts a remarkable restriction on power that is constitutionally reserved for the federal government.

This is one agreement in over 600 that we are going to enter into in this country. I look at the Tsawwassen Indian Band, in my own neighbourhood, located a mile or so north of the international boundary at Point Roberts. There are ongoing issues between the province of British Columbia and the state of Washington, or in essence between Canada and the United States. There are fisheries issues there.

If we were to go right along the coast then, any band that says it has an interest in fish on the west coast of Canada, any band from Alaska down to the border at Washington state, would have an interest in fish, sign an agreement, and demand the same right that the Tlicho First Nation has. How do we manage this? Every band has a right to veto. Every band has a right to be consulted on a matter which affects all Canadians.

Government Orders

The Magna Carta was signed in 1200. Essentially, the signing was to limit the authority of the lords. It has grown from that point to the point where we are sitting here in this House of Commons, as members of Parliament, representing the people of Canada. The Government of Canada is supposed to be the authority over the lands of Canada and sharing that responsibility with a province.

This agreement sets up one group of Canadians and says that this group will have the final say on a lot of legislation that will be introduced in this place.

•(1705)

Hon. Sue Barnes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this gives me an opportunity to correct some of the things that were said in the last few minutes.

By way of information to the member, a ways and means motion is required for any bill involving new taxes, an increase of an existing tax, or extension of a tax to a new class of taxpayers. Bills requiring such a motion must be introduced in the House of Commons under the Constitution Act, 1867, and Standing Order 80 (1) of the rules of the House. The Nisga'a Final Agreement Act had a ways and means motion. In fact, in a prior debate on this bill in the House, I read that into the record so there would be no confusion. I had hoped we had put that argument to rest.

I will go now to matrimonial real property because this is a critically important issue on reserves which has not been solved. However, the Tlicho people live in public communities, not on reserves, and as a result they are subject to territorial law regarding matrimonial property in the same manner as any other NWT resident. Under the Tlicho agreement the Tlicho will not own lands in the communities and these lands will not be reserves. Instead, local community governments will own the fee simple lands, and territorial laws relating to matrimonial property will therefore continue to apply on those lands.

These are the basics that people will understand if they read the agreement. However, it is very difficult to combat these 12 issues. There have been 12 issues over the last number of weeks that the Conservative Party has put forward time and time again. Just because it is repeated, does not make it right.

We have a situation where the Tlicho agreement draws a distinction between land rights and non-land rights. Certainty is achieved both for land rights and non-land based rights, and finality is achieved for the land rights. This is a progressive modern treaty. It is all well and good to be against this piece of legislation. We have worked on this bill in committee and there has been a respect for the people who have worked hard on this agreement.

In fact, the members of the Conservative Party made a good point in committee. They said they were not trying to delay the implementation of this bill. I have sat here all afternoon and listened to the same points even when they were answered two hours previously. There is a time and a place, and there is a vote. We want to get to the vote.

I am going to say to the hon. member that we can agree to disagree. He is entitled to his differing opinion. Hopefully, it is an informed opinion, but at the end of the day, these people have waited longer in negotiating this agreement than many of the members in the House have terms in Parliament.

Is it the proposition of this hon. member that, like every parliamentarian who might come and go because of maybe losing an election or two, we re-ratify these agreements every time? It is very clear that every Parliament has a new crop of MPs. If we were to go with the suggestion that was laid on the table about the role of parliamentarians with respect to ratification, there would never be a ratification in the House.

•(1710)

Mr. John Cummins: Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary is somewhat confused. The effect of the bill is to create a third order of aboriginal government.

Article 7.7.2 and article 7.7.4 prescribe the following hierarchy of government: one, federal legislation of general application; two, territorial legislation implementing Canadian international agreements; three, Tlicho laws; four, territorial legislation of general application; and five, specific federal legislation relating to the Tlicho. In other words, Tlicho laws prevail over territorial laws and also over federal laws relating to the Tlicho. My friends from Quebec would love to have an agreement like this, I am sure.

On taxation and royalties, the Tlicho get about 2% of the royalties of the two existing diamond mines in their area. Any future mineral or subsurface development on Tlicho lands would result in a payment of the royalties to them.

Premier Williams of Newfoundland and Labrador would love to get this agreement. He would love to get 100% of the royalties that accrued and should be accruing to Newfoundland and Labrador from the oil resources off that shore. He cannot get it. These folks can.

An hon. member: Nonsense.

Mr. John Cummins: Madam Speaker, listen to them over there. It is unbelievable.

That is what the agreement does. Members opposite do not understand the effects of their own legislation and that is what bothers me the most.

When we go back to the Constitution, the notion of aboriginal rights were thrown in without definition. Nobody knew what it meant. Nobody took the time to define it. It was thrown in and we have been debating it ever since. It has been expensive. We have had court case after court case and then we get nonsense like the bill that is before us today, which is opening the doors to nothing but lawsuits and ongoing negotiations that will never end.

When will the members in this place wake up? To suggest that this place changes with every election and somehow there is no continuity is beyond the pale. The issue is that these notions should have been carefully defined by the House so that parliaments that follow would have an idea of what was meant by terms like "inherent right". That is the issue. That is our job and we are not doing it.

Government Orders

Our job is to ensure that there is clear definition. Our job is to ensure that the definitions are clear so that if there is a problem and the matter ends up in the Supreme Court of Canada, the Supreme Court knows what Parliament's intention was.

The debate we have had on the bill, this non-debate, this debate that gets thrown out at the last minute so that it is impossible for members to adequately prepare is the problem. Members opposite do not want to discuss the issue. They do not want clear definition. They do not want the people of Canada to be heard on these matters. They are simply not concerned with the effects of their actions.

We could look at the estimates over time and the money that was spent time after time in negotiating these agreements. How does it improve the life of native people in this country? We should think back to Davis Inlet. There was \$152 million spent to move the poor people of Davis Inlet from one location to another. The government said that would fix the problems of drug and alcohol abuse, of sexual abuse and all the ills of the community. The government said it would fix it by moving those folks from community A to community B.

Has it fixed anything? Not a thing. The problems go on, and why? Because every morning when those kids wake up in Davis Inlet, nothing has changed. Whether they wake up in the old community or whether they wake up in the new one, it does not matter. The kids look out their windows at the street and they see the broken down snowmobile, the pick-up truck that is not running, or the stray dog. The vista does not change from day to day. It is all the same.

Nothing ever changes. They cannot better themselves because there are no economic opportunities there. There is nothing to make their lives better. Then the young people turn on the TV and they get pictures coming in from Los Angeles, from Toronto, from London, and they ask, "How can those people live like that? Why not us?"

• (1715)

The government spent \$152 million to move them from one community to another to improve nothing, to provide no economic opportunities and to provide no hope for those individuals to improve their lives. The money was spent and the government members feel good. They spent money but they got nowhere. They fixed nothing. That is going to happen here. Nothing is going to be fixed.

Hon. Sue Barnes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to put this bill into context. My riding of London West is in southwestern Ontario. It is an urban riding. I do not have many first nations, Métis or Inuit in my riding but I am the parliamentary secretary of one of the most exciting portfolios that one could get in this government.

I am very proud to work with all the people who support the evolution of Canada because that is what we are seeing here. We are actually making history. The headlines are full of many things and yet this bill is making history. It is making history for the people in the Northwest Territories. Their territorial government has recognized what a magnificent piece of legislation this is, what it will do not only for the citizens who reside in the Northwest Territories but for the Tlicho people who have patiently and poignantly and with

pride worked for over a decade on this agreement and before that on the other treaty agreement that gave rise to this agreement.

I point out to my constituents and all people of this country that it takes patience, knowledge, give and take, humanity, to put together an agreement of this magnitude, to make a modern treaty. The Tlicho are Canadians and they are also Tlicho citizens. They are very proud of their heritage and their culture. This agreement allows them to continue that in the manner that they see best.

This is a progressive grouping of first nations people in the north who have taken back, not their total territory from history, but 39,000 square kilometres which is originally 19% of the traditional territory of the Tlicho. There have been many boundaries around this 39,000 square kilometres which have had other first nations people in the north working together to come to an agreement so that we have certainty on boundaries. Each of the negotiations on the overlap boundary agreements has a history and is a story in itself.

What we have here is a people in Canada having a self-government agreement and a land claims agreement, not the first in Canada but certainly the first in the Northwest Territories. The first in Canada that I worked on with my colleague from Nunavut was the Nisga'a agreement. I chaired the committee at that time. My colleague who is the chair of this self-government agreement and has done a marvellous job in committee also worked on the Nisga'a agreement.

I have listened to the arguments in this chamber. It would be easy to spend my time at the end of this debate concentrating on the 12 points that have been raised time and again and which have been debunked time and again, not with my opinion but with the opinion of the lawyers. Those opinions have been from the Tlicho lawyers, from the justice department lawyers, from the territorial lawyers, from the ministers who have to say to the government when they bring the legislation to cabinet that it is charter proof. In fact every lawyer that testified said that this is compliant. The charter does apply. This is the law of our land that is accepted.

The negotiation has gone on for a long time but it is time to end it. It is time to end this step in the House today so we can stand and vote tomorrow. As we rise we can be very proud that we are not only acknowledging our small part in the history that is happening in this chamber, but to acknowledge the patience, the fortitude and the wisdom of the Tlicho people in the four communities and their ancestors. They have worked to make this an agreement that they are very prepared to live with in the context of a modern Canada.

I am sure that this agreement did not encapsulate everything that the negotiation started with. It is a give and take. People came with honour to make an agreement. This is a unique agreement because not only did the three signatories, the Government of Canada, the territorial government and the Tlicho people sign and initial it, but they actually went back and did a further six months of consultations.

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They drew in all the other stakeholders, all those other people who may have concerns, all those other boards. We live in a complex world. There are water boards. There are environmental boards. There are neighbouring land claims. There are municipal governments. There is industry. There are businesses. They gave them a second chance. They said, "Let us go out there and consult one more time. Let us make sure".

• (1720)

By having that extra patience, by doing that extra consultation—and there were over hundreds of consultations on this agreement—they came back before our committee of the House and were able to have their neighbours, their colleagues and other levels of government stand before us as witnesses and say, "We support this agreement".

I am here to celebrate, Madam Speaker, because this is worth celebrating. It was a celebration when they signed in the Northwest Territories. Our former prime minister was there with them. A month later, I sort of sneaked into the community, very low key, and had someone local drive me. I met with some of the people and took a look around in the communities with some of the old names like Rae Edzo and some of the other areas.

Later on in that visit over a year and a quarter ago now, I also flew to Diavik diamond mine. What did I discover there? I found that the Tlicho people had a sophisticated human resource relationship with the progressive industry of the north and that they had learned how to facilitate, educate and set in motion new scholarship funds and programs so that their community could benefit from the resources of the future. Their community and their people would take the self-government to self-education and self-empowerment.

All people in this country pay taxes and they pay taxes. They will continue to pay taxes. In the House I have heard arguments that lead me to believe that some of the hon. members have not even read the agreement, but here we are today. We are very close. I must acknowledge the patience of people who have to listen to some of these arguments because it must be difficult.

I do not pretend to know everything about this agreement. I have read it. I have studied it. But I do know that three levels of government and three people of honour representing three different parties have come together after this amount of time with negotiators who have worked many years. In fact, some of the elders and some of the original people involved have already passed on and it is out of respect for them that these people come with patience and they come with a trust that we are going to do the right thing in the House.

I would like to commend the critics from the NDP and the Bloc for working with us on the bill. In a minority government, I think that has been something we can also celebrate, because on this legislation everybody has worked hard.

I will even acknowledge that for the most part the Conservative Party has not tried to unduly delay this piece of legislation. I will give them that. I hope that it will be tomorrow that we finally stand to get the bill voted on.

I have no objection if members find in their hearts that they cannot vote for the legislation, but I ask them to at least do it with factual legal issues that have been explained—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Hon. Sue Barnes:—maybe not to your satisfaction but certainly to my satisfaction and to that of the three parties around the House, one territorial government and the Tlicho people of the north, who will be most directly affected by this.

I want to say that I am proud of my colleagues in the House who have taken the time to do their homework and support the bill. Tomorrow I am going to be prouder still to stand and give it my support because I understand that this is the way we move into the future.

We move into future together because we want economic, social and health benefits, all those good benefits that come with certainty. I know that when the premier gave testimony he said he thought it would be devastating if the bill did not get through. In the north, where they do not even have parties in their parliament and legislative house, 19 individual members of the legislative assembly made their own decision and unanimously ratified this agreement.

Those of us here have a chance to show that we can do something that will greatly affect the lives of generations for the positive. I am not concerned that some of the members opposite do not want to see that happen. I am disappointed, but I believe that for the majority of Canadians, if they understood the history, if they understood the story, if they understood our Constitution as I know some of them do, going forward they would be very proud of this work, as I am.

There are very difficult days in Parliament, but every once in a while we get to work on something that we are proud of. I am proud of this piece of work and I am proud of the people who have helped.

• (1725)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have had the honour over the last four years of working for the Algonquin Nation in Quebec, a proud community that never signed any treaties with Canada and is still continuing their fight to get land deals worked out. In fact, one community I worked with started out with a 70,000 acre reserve. That reserve arbitrarily was moved down to 38,000 acres and then moved down to 9,000 acres.

That community is down to 4,000 acres today on the worst section of ground in a most beautiful agricultural region. That land will never come back to them. The damage this has done to that community has impacts on generation after generation.

I had the great pleasure of working with that community in trying to redress some of those historic grievances, so I am very pleased to hear the hon. member's words about the bill and the attempt to move forward with our first nation neighbours. Does the hon. member think that Bill C-14 might be a model for other first nation communities that have been left out and still need land deals settled? On top of that, how can we start to move these forward in a timely and just manner?

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• (1730)

Hon. Sue Barnes: Madam Speaker, that question is a very good question to have discussed in the House. In fact, the question is one that will be put. As many hon. members know, last April a round table was held with the Prime Minister and many of Canada's aboriginal leaders. There were to be six breakout sessions held. One of them, to be held in Calgary in mid-January, I believe, will be on the treaty process and some of the issues relating to that. That session will be with aboriginal, first nations, Métis and Inuit people. Discussions will be at a hands on level, not a political level, about how we have to move this process so that it is faster, because it is very difficult to wait a decade to get agreements done, or in the case of Nisga'a, nearly a century.

I believe that understanding has seeped in to most members in this chamber. I believe that, through television, by hearing the stories, by the creation of Nunavut, and through the different land claims agreements that have gone through the House, Canadians understand that with certainty economics go ahead, that with certainty on land claims the economics and the social are linked and people move forward and forge their destiny. I am pleased that the member and his party are also on side with this type of philosophy.

Although we come from different parties, I think that sometimes the best work can be done when we do try to work together in the House. This has been evidenced with this bill. This has been evidenced by the work done in committee. People understood what they were doing. The witnesses came before us and we heard their stories. There was no dissent with the witnesses who appeared before us. They all wanted us to move and to move quickly. I hope we will continue to do that.

Mr. Jeremy Harrison (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have to take issue with the parliamentary secretary's characterization of my party's opposition to Bill C-14 as being in bad faith in some way. We put forward very constructive questions. We made our submissions in good faith. We have very real and very serious concerns with this and, to be quite frank, we have not received any answers to our questions.

I have stood in the House four times today asking about the reason for the inclusion, at the insistence of the federal government, of article 7.13.2. I still do not have an answer. I asked this question numerous times in committee as well. For the parliamentary secretary to stand up in her place and act like these submissions and these questions we are asking are in bad faith is completely beyond the pale.

Hon. Sue Barnes: Madam Speaker, I thought I was talking about the good faith of the parties going along with this. I certainly did not—and I apologize if I made that error—and would not talk directly about bad faith by the party opposite, because I do not believe the members are in bad faith. In fact, I thought I had made the point that they had been trying to move this, not unduly delay it. I certainly had no intention of saying that it was bad faith.

I would say that I disagree with the member's ideas. I think the member has been answered with respect to the one point on the international stuff. If the point is with respect to foreign affairs, as a project of law goes through a cabinet all cabinet ministers at the table have ample opportunity to input into that. The justice department is

the final drafter, but any department, whether it is foreign affairs, agriculture or finance, all of them, would have input.

If anything, the point with respect to the trade issue is to clarify to make sure that there is no conflict. In fact, the sections are very clear. I read the sections into the record in committee when the member who was asked the question was present and that would be in the Hansard of the committee.

• (1735)

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have been in the House since the year 2000 and there have been things that the federal government has done in the area of foreign affairs when there has been absolutely no consultation with anybody in the opposition or with this Parliament. They are done in the Prime Minister's Office or in cabinet and so on and that is the end of it.

There are over 600 first nations communities across the country. There are 10 provinces. There are large communities across the country, communities of 3,500 people and larger.

Is the parliamentary secretary suggesting that the precedent being created here in consulting a community of 3,500 people on matters of foreign affairs will become a kind of template for dealing with 10 provinces, the opposition parties and the 600-plus other first nations communities across the country?

What kind of massive bureaucracy is the Liberal government going to create if we follow that path in conducting foreign affairs? I really question the wisdom of this. It could be a bureaucratic nightmare if we follow this path.

I asked this question earlier today, but I did not get anywhere close to getting an answer to the question. I would give the parliamentary secretary an opportunity to outline how we are going to create a framework in this country to deal with all these communities across Canada and consult with them every time this country wants to conduct foreign policy.

Hon. Sue Barnes: Madam Speaker, the word consult is defined in the agreement. There is not a consultation in this. Consult is a legal term. If my hon. friend would like to understand this properly, he should go to the Hansard of—

An hon. member: Are you a lawyer?

Hon. Sue Barnes: I am a lawyer and I will try to explain it so maybe you will take the time—

An hon. member: He's a lawyer too.

Hon. Sue Barnes: If you don't want to listen to the answer, I will gladly sit down.

An hon. member: We don't like the answer.

Hon. Sue Barnes: Madam Speaker, shall I continue?

Hon. Sue Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker, the answer is spelled out because we did it two or three times in the committee. If the hon. member would care to read the committee Hansard he would see that all of these sections were read into the record. They were confirmed by the justice lawyers and they were confirmed by members of the Tlicho community. That is very clear.

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But there is a desire, I believe, to make it less than clear when the members opposite stand up. These have been answered. They have been answered over and over again and the agreement is explicit.

An hon. member: Well, answer it for me then.

Hon. Sue Barnes: Yes, I will answer it for you.

The Tlicho community cannot enter into international trade agreements. It is simple. There is a section in the agreement that says on the Tlicho law, and in fact, I could probably find that section; it might take a minute but I have quoted into the committee Hansard, where I read out the section that that if there is anything inadvertently done, then there is an authority under the agreement to have to have it reversed. There is a whole process to go through.

It has been answered. I just do not think they really want to hear these answers.

Mr. Roger Valley (Kenora, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I first want to say that I am on the aboriginal affairs and northern development committee and I have heard the answers to the questions that have been asked by the official opposition. The same questions have been asked repeatedly and the answers have been given. If they do not want to listen, they cannot be made to hear.

We know there was a lot of support for the Tlicho agreement. We know the voting percentages were very high. Since we have started this debate in the House, which has taken a number of weeks, has there been any word on the level of support in the communities? Are the communities back home interested in this topic? What are people saying about it? What is the response of the representatives who we heard at committee and who have been working on this?

• (1740)

Hon. Sue Barnes: Madam Speaker, I thank all hon. members who worked at the committee on this bill.

If I had the voting turnout and the voter percentage that the Tlicho people had I would never have to worry about my seat. It was over 84.6%, 92% ratification and anyone who was absent was counted as a no vote. I do not think we could get better than that in a democracy.

Every witness who came before the committee was supportive, whether it was the territorial government or non-Tlicho citizens living in Tlicho territory of which there are only a couple of hundred people.

In fact, the public government that would be put into effect through this agreement would allow for non-Tlicho citizens to be represented on the councils of the board.

I salute these people and I give them the honour they deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, I would ask that the motion be deferred until 3 p.m. tomorrow.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): The vote is deferred until 3 p.m. tomorrow.

* * *

[Translation]

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ACT

The House resumed from December 1, consideration of the motion that C-22, an act to establish the Department of Social Development and to amend and repeal certain related Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Madam Speaker, I remind the House that the purpose of this bill is to split in two the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development and to create the Department of Social Development. Indeed, such is the objective of Bill C-22 now before us.

I want to make my presentation in three parts. First, it is rather unusual to see that even though the House has not yet voted on this measure, the Prime Minister has already split the department. He created the Department of Social Development a year ago. However, this House has yet to vote on this.

We have before us a government that claims to be transparent and to submit such important issues to a vote in the House, but it now does so after the fact. One wonders if the government did not make things unnecessarily complicated for itself, in case the House voted against splitting that department.

Second, this is in total contradiction with a commitment made by the government. Indeed, hon. members will remember that an amendment was made to the throne speech to ensure that this House unanimously recognized—this is what was done—the jurisdictions of the provinces and of Quebec, as they relate to their respective responsibilities. However, we now find ourselves dealing with a bill creating a department whose primary mandate is to infringe on the jurisdictions of the provinces, of Quebec and of the territories.

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Moreover, this department will take charge of or will monitor programs and systems that the provinces, particularly Quebec, established to support community organizations. Parapublic support organizations were created and developed over the years precisely because of a lack of federal funding. We are all aware of the cuts made by the federal governments in transfers to the provinces, including Quebec. This compelled each province, including Quebec, which is my province, to reduce its own budget and social programs in such a way that now some groups in the community are forced to assume responsibilities that should be assumed by the whole community. Today, it is rather paradoxical to see that the government, through its Department of Social Development, wants to monitor these organizations.

Third, I wish to make it clear that what is immediately apparent is a desire to add a second head through the social development component, already a part of Human Resources and Skills Development. The government's argument in connection with costs is that there will be no additional costs, only a second component, because there will be just one entry point. It therefore becomes quite difficult to follow the government's argument about the efficiency meant to result from this second department, as concerns the delivery of the services these two departments are responsible for.

Our position on this bill will not come as a surprise to anyone, I am sure. We will be voting against it. As we have already said, we cannot support the creation of a department that is mandated to interfere in areas under provincial and Quebec jurisdiction.

The Department of Social Development assumes part of the responsibilities for health, education and even municipal affairs. Agreeing to the creation of this department is tantamount to agreeing that the federal government has a role to play in social development. That makes it the equivalent of the provincial departments of social affairs.

The argument that this represents a desire on the government's part to support the provincial programs is a bit disquieting. What it does do is add to the costs. I will address the mechanisms of all this a little later on.

Now 97% of that department's budget will go to incomes for seniors, that is the old age pension and the guaranteed income supplement. This leaves 3% for other programs. What then is the real purpose of having that 97% of the budget already administered by Human Resources stay with Human Resources as far as the delivery itself and related services are concerned? We are in fact told that there will be a single entry point.

• (1745)

So, it is possible to be surprised by this government's true intentions with regard to this department. When we say that this infringes on the jurisdictions of the provinces and Quebec, it is not a fear, but a reality.

I want to remind the House that, when the Confederation was created in 1867, none of the existing programs was a federal responsibility. They all belonged to the provinces, and it was not until 1940, to resolve labour problems caused by the war, that the provinces and the federal government reached an agreement giving the latter temporary responsibility for unemployment insurance only.

So, it is clear what has happened since then. All these infringements just from having allowed that first step. There were infringements in other areas under provincial jurisdiction, such as manpower training, health, the municipalities, parental leave, day care, the environment and community affairs and volunteerism, social housing and affordable housing. These are only examples.

It is quite surprising to see, despite the wishes of the territories, provinces and Quebec, just how much the federal government has gradually taken from the provinces, in addition to a share of the relevant funding and a large share of the funding normally allocated to these responsibilities.

I want to also draw the attention of the House to the following fact, which corroborates what I just said. Two departments are being created, a single window. So, out of a \$73 billion budget, the Department of Social Development gets the bigger share, a \$53-billion budget and 12,000 public servants. The main department gets \$12 billion and 14,000 employees and responsibility for a single window.

• (1750)

It is clear that more complexity has been added to the already adequate and even excessive administration. In fact, in employment insurance alone, even public servants recognize that they can be confused. Sometimes they are completely lost. That is another problem for EI claimants.

Since time is passing quickly, I will now move to taxation with respect to children. We know how the federal government has set things up so that parents are gradually removed from a share of income with respect to taxes, as responsible parents, relative to the federal law. I will return to this later with respect to the subject of child care.

There is one other aspect I must mention. The government is once again getting us enmeshed in a duplicate structure, while we were, instead, expecting practical services relating to the commitments that it had made. Let us take the guaranteed income supplement for example. At one time or another, 270,000 Canadians have been denied the GIS, even though they were entitled to it. These people have had \$3.2 billion taken away from them.

The Bloc Québécois was legitimately expecting that, instead of trying to create more structures, the government would have listened to the voice of the electorate during the recent campaign. The people told the government that it had to intervene in some issues to correct the situation.

I was speaking of employment insurance. Now I will address the guaranteed income supplement. It is intended for the most vulnerable people in our society, older persons with a yearly income less than \$12,000. Since these people were not informed of their rights, they could not get the GIS, although they should have had it automatically as a consequence of filing a tax return.

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The Bloc Québécois has worked on raising awareness and was able to find 25,000 of these people, who are now receiving a total of \$100 million. We have enabled them to get back \$100 million, split among these 25,000 people. That is one accomplishment.

But tens of thousands of others are not part of the system yet, because they do not know about it. These are often persons who are isolated. That is not their fault. They are among the least well-off in society. Instead of taking positive steps to alleviate their plight and help them put food on the table—often they have to choose between paying rent and buying groceries—once again, we are presented with a structure that does nothing to improve the plight of these person, yet makes administering programs per se more cumbersome.

Now, let us look at the stated purpose of the government in dividing this department into two. With respect to the Department of Human Resources, the purpose of the act is as follows:

HRSDC's vision is to build a country where everyone has the opportunity to learn and to contribute to Canada's success—

Hon. Don Boudria: Bravo.

Mr. Yves Lessard: My hon. colleague here may be saying, “bravo”, but the purpose is not first and foremost to contribute to Canada's success; it is to ensure that there are programs in place so that the people for whom they were designed can benefit from them.

The chair of the Subcommittee on Children and Youth at Risk in Canada, the hon. member for Don Valley West, said:

The objective of the Department of Social Development now is to have the public and history remember the Liberal government.

I do not hear my colleague shouting bravo this time. He is a little embarrassed. It is embarrassing too. I can understand him. I too would be embarrassed in his place.

● (1755)

These programs are created to try to relieve hardship. That is why we call it social development. In the provinces, it is the department of social affairs or health and social services to cover all this. It is clear from the name what is involved.

The stated purposes of these two departments are worrying. One purpose is to consolidate the public's vision of Canada and the other is to ensure that the Liberal government is remembered in a positive light. How nice.

I will now move on to the agreement on early childhood development. The government has announced a program that will be similar to and even modelled after the program in Quebec. In setting up a structure that will duplicate and complicate access to these services, the money the government is announcing for the child care program it plans to set up is clearly inadequate for meeting the needs of all the provinces. It is talking about \$1.3 billion, but in our experience in Quebec it costs much more than that.

The government is announcing that it will set up child care in the other provinces—something we agree with—and although we are happy for them, it must also announce how it plans to right the wrong that stems from the fact that Quebec already has a \$5 or \$7 a day child care system in place. In fact, parents who were entitled to receive a tax credit did not receive it.

While they say that is a separate issue, it does have an impact on people's incomes. They have paid taxes and if we had an equitable system with the other provinces these parents would receive a tax credit. At least the \$230 million the federal government saves every year should be returned to Quebec. In turn, Quebec could reinject the money into measures to help parents, such as parental programs.

Over the past few years, the government has saved several billion dollars because the provinces have managed to develop their own social programs despite the tight budgets imposed on them by the federal government. The hon. member would not be heckling like that unless he had forgotten that his own party, along with all the parliamentarians here, had to acknowledge the fiscal imbalance—which they have another name for—as a fact. A fact is a fact.

One of the facts that will not go away is the fact that the government deprived the provinces of money to which they were entitled. This means that the provinces, including Quebec, have had to make considerable efforts to be able to provide adequate social programs.

● (1800)

Incidentally, from 1998 to this day, the federal government has recovered \$1 billion, thanks to Quebec's child care system. This is a significant amount.

I will conclude very quickly by saying that the money invested by the federal government in provincial jurisdictions has increased more rapidly than the money invested in the programs that come under its own jurisdiction. Based on the growth rate that we have observed, since 1997-98, non intrusive spending has increased by 1.9%, while intrusive spending has increased by 5.2%.

I will stop here, but I hope to have the opportunity to complete my presentation during questions and comments.

Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by our colleague opposite. I must say that I fail to understand his position. In my opinion, it is not about whether such and such a program is to my colleague's liking. Rather, it is a question of whether the Department of Human Resources Development and the Department of Social Development should be one department or two. That is the question. So, it is a question of whether we want, in this House or elsewhere, a champion of all issues under the Department of Social Development.

Of course, it is not the same for every issue, but it could be children, child benefits or the early childhood initiative. However, programs come and go. It could be individuals with a disability.

Last Friday, we celebrated the International Day of Disabled Persons, under the auspices of the United Nations. A series of awards were handed out. I attended a ceremony as did many of my colleagues.

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There are also all the issues related to disability benefits under the Canada pension plan. I know there was an agreement under which nine provinces joined together to create the Canada pension plan. Quebec refused to sign this agreement, as was its right. This was in 1967, if I am not mistaken. Nonetheless, these programs exist. Should this come under employment insurance or under a different department?

In my opinion, the government made a good decision by making it the responsibility of a different department. We must not forget the New Horizons program. Old age security was introduced in 1927. The Canadian government played a role in this plan. It is not a matter of whether it has this role or not. This plan has existed since 1927 in one form or another. Initially, there were premiums and then there were none.

In light of all these facts, would it not be more logical for employment insurance and related matters to be grouped together, and to have social development on its own, as the bill proposes? This is essentially my question.

● (1805)

Mr. Yves Lessard: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his extremely pertinent and very instructive question, coming as it does from a member of the party in power.

The hon. member knows what this new department is for. His question as to whether it would not be better to have two departments is a good one. In principle, the answer is yes. This is the problem. The Liberals never look past the initial stage, and make decisions accordingly.

But there is another stage, what they actually do. They invade provincial jurisdiction. The issue is not just about pride, about defending one's area of jurisdiction, but about unnecessary spending and interference in the jurisdiction of others. When a province or Quebec has jurisdiction or full autonomy, then there is no need to tell us what to do. That is one thing.

Then there is another point. The hon. member ought to know, had he looked properly at the bill itself, that it does not mean any additional funds or services for the people who will be at the receiving end, particularly since, as I said, there is a single entry point.

For example, as far as answers to seniors concerning their pension income or the guaranteed income supplement are concerned, we are told it will be the same entry point as before, that is one connected to Human Resources. I think the hon. member ought to take that into consideration. This is where our authority as parliamentarians lies to take firm action to put an end to this needless expense.

We know about the hidden programs of the past. Take the Canadian unity fund, and its waste of \$750 million. That was a program that was on the side, not under MPs' surveillance. There were plenty of things being done under the table, and we know what that led to.

This is something we ought to have our say about—and we will—because the taxpayers' dollars are involved. Now we feel they will end up paying twice, which will solve nothing and simply add to the administrative burden.

● (1810)

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a question for my colleague from Chambly—Borduas. At the beginning of his speech, he mentioned something about dividing the department in two. I would like to know if, from a budget point of view, having two departments will mean more money, or if that will not change anything.

Mr. Yves Lessard: Madam Speaker, the question is very pertinent. The answers we have been given regarding these two departments is that this does not increase overall spending. On the other hand, if we look more closely and analyze budget trends since 1998, we see that over the past six years, there has been encroachment to the tune of an additional \$15 billion. Let us look at what appears under the heading of development for this department.

The youth employment strategy has a budget of \$315 million. That is under provincial jurisdiction. They have dipped into other budgets and come sprinkling that money here. My colleague calls it sprinkling, and she is right.

The Health Transition Fund has received \$150 million. But if there is one thing that is under provincial and Quebec jurisdiction, health certainly is. The community action program for children and the prenatal nutrition program have received \$99 million. The Canadian Health Information System has a group of people who come and sneak around in the provinces to find incompetent people, because jurisdiction belongs to the provinces and Quebec. The provinces have the expertise and the science, because they have been working on this for many years. This system alone has received \$50 million more.

The Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation received \$2.5 billion. Funding of \$260 million has been allocated to connecting Canadians to information and knowledge, even though knowledge and education belong to the provinces. The initiative to strengthen communities and the voluntary sector, which has grown in recent years expressly to try to fill in the gaps left by the government's squeezing of the provinces, has \$40 million. The Canadian Institutes of Health Research, another fancy toy, has received \$240 million. That is still under Quebec and provincial jurisdiction.

The Canada Foundation for Innovation has received an injection of \$200 million. Knowledge dissemination, although the institutions concerned with knowledge are within provincial jurisdiction, has received \$96 million. The NURSE Fund—Nurses Using Research and Evaluation, under provincial jurisdiction as well, has been given \$25 million. The Canada research chairs program has received \$900 million. The supporting communities partnership initiative, which provides help to the homeless, has received \$753 million.

My hon. colleague's answer is that, in principle, there has been no increase. But when we look at it more closely the money being moved around is being used once again to impose additional constraints on provincial governments and Quebec. It is unacceptable. That is why we will vote against this bill.

Government Orders

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to refer to a certain frustration expressed by the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, when he said that the Bloc Québécois was against programs for seniors, old age security and any of the programs that will be transferred to the Department of Social Development. That is not what we are talking about.

We would have preferred the department not to be divided into two, because we know very well that this is encroaching on areas of provincial jurisdiction. We are not questioning the \$97 million for seniors. We are being portrayed as not wanting seniors to be better cared for.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague to address some of the glitches in government-run programs like the guaranteed income supplement.

• (1815)

Mr. Yves Lessard: Madam Speaker, my answer will be brief.

For the guaranteed income supplement alone, it would have been easy for the government to react by saying that an automatic mechanism will be put in place to correct the blatant injustice done to these people. They are owed an incredible amount of money, yet are eligible to only 11 months of retroactive payment. But when it comes to tax abatements for individuals who hide, in the Canary Islands or elsewhere, money they owe the government, retroactivity applies as far back as 1995. In fact, the Prime Minister is one of them.

There is a double standard. There is an injustice, and it must be corrected.

[*English*]

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there was a time, not so long ago, when Canadians with disabilities were defined by what they could not do rather than by what they could do. Many of us were blind to our own ignorance and prejudice, unable to see beyond the disability to the person inside

Times are changing. People with disabilities are more visible and more vocal. Today, no less than 12% of our population, or some 3.6 million Canadians, have a disability of some kind. More than ever before, people with disabilities are participating in and contributing to the economic, cultural, and political life of Canada. Indeed, as a nation, we cannot afford to waste all the talent and knowledge that people with disabilities have to offer.

This is why the creation of the Department of Social Development is so important. The new department has a mandate to secure and strengthen Canada's social foundations. We want every citizen in our country to realize their human potential and to play an active role in society, not because it is the right thing to do but because, in the 21st century, Canada needs to harness all of its vast potential to achieve its social and economic objectives.

The Government of Canada already plays a key role in supporting the inclusion and participation of people with disabilities in the workplace and in the community. We work with the provinces, territories, and other partners to support persons with disabilities in their roles as learners, workers, volunteers, and active members of

our community. We do this through policy leadership and through our investments.

The government currently allocates \$6.7 billion a year for income support, tax measures, and programs for Canadians with disabilities. This includes \$253 million to help people with disabilities find and retain employment, and \$50 million to help families care for a disabled child.

I wish to give some examples to show the scope of our support through Social Development Canada's key programs. Through the opportunities fund for persons with disabilities, projects that help persons with disabilities prepare for, find and retain employment, Social Development Canada is contributing \$69,000 in the region of Winnipeg; \$95,000 in the region of Mégantic, Quebec; and \$69,000 in the region of St. Margaret's Bay, Nova Scotia.

Large or small, these projects make a difference. That said, we must do more to break down the physical, financial, and attitudinal barriers that keep people with disabilities from reaching their full potential. I am pleased to note that the Government of Canada is taking concrete steps to make this happen.

The very creation of this department is a step in the right direction. By creating separate portfolios for Social Development and Human Resources Development, the government is giving more weight and legitimacy to each one. This will enable the government to ensure disability issues are kept high on its agenda.

At the same time, the two departments will continue to share the delivery of some services. This common integrated structure will reduce overlap and duplication, ensuring that Canadians receive high quality and cost effective service. We will continue to work hard to improve coordination on disability issues across the government.

I would add that this narrowing of focus and responsibility draws on recommendations from the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. This same committee deserves recognition for recommending modifications to the Canada disability pension plan, so that it more accurately meets today's needs, and changes to the disability tax credit will enable people with disabilities to become more self-reliant.

As noted in the Speech from the Throne, the government will build on these previous tax measures by drawing on the upcoming recommendations of the technical advisory committee on tax measures for persons with disabilities. In fact, budget 2004 implemented one of the committee's earlier recommendations, the creation of a disability supports deduction at an annual cost of \$15 million.

The throne speech also announced that the government will expand existing tax relief for Canadians who care for those with severe disabilities. The government will ask Parliament to consult across the country on possible additional initiatives.

Government Orders

● (1820)

Budget 2004 announced automatic reinstatement for recipients of Canada pension plan disability benefits. The new provision of the Canada pension plan will provide a safety net for persons with disabilities who want to try returning to work without putting their CPP benefits at risk. It guarantees that their benefits will be automatically restarted any time within two years of returning to work if the same or related disability prevents them from continuing their employment.

Disability issues are a priority for this government. However, since so many of these issues fall outside federal jurisdiction, it is crucial that we develop good working relationships with our provincial and territorial partners.

To that end, last April the Government of Canada and the provinces launched new labour market agreements for persons with disabilities to enable Canadians with disabilities to participate more fully in the labour market. These agreements replace the employability assistance for people with disabilities initiative.

Budget 2004 announced increased funding for the new agreements, bringing the total federal contribution to \$223 million annually, which is an increase of \$30 million each year.

In the spirit of partnership, the new initiatives enable provincial governments to determine how best to meet the needs of people with disabilities in their jurisdictions. The range of interventions include everything from job coaching and mentoring, to training and skills upgrading, to wage subsidies.

The Government of Canada and its provincial counterparts recognize the need to evaluate our programs under the labour market agreement for persons with disabilities. We need to understand what works, what does not, and how we can do better.

Last Friday, the International Day of Disabled Persons, governments released baseline reports against which we will be able to measure future results. Each year on that date governments will report on their programming to show what progress has been made to improve the participation of Canadians with disabilities in the labour market.

Nothing can ever go far enough, but we are making progress. Disability issues have now become part of the public agenda and the principles of access and inclusion have become part of our vocabulary. I need only point to the Speech from the Throne, which identifies seven commitments that will guide the government's actions on behalf of Canadians. It calls for the government to defend the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and to be a steadfast advocate of inclusion. It calls for the government to demand equality of opportunity so that all Canadians can share in our country's prosperity.

The government cannot achieve these goals on its own. Meeting the needs of people with disabilities will require the active participation of all Canadians. It will require all of us to question our assumptions, to actively seek to understand the needs and aspirations of people with disabilities and to commit ourselves to building a truly inclusive society where each of us can reach our full potential.

● (1825)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ): Madam Speaker, and to think I was about to be ignored. It would have broken my heart. I thank you for this opportunity to speak. It is a pleasure for me to speak on Bill C-22, which creates the Department of Social Development.

We in the Bloc Québécois cannot approach this subject without a mention of our party critic, the hon. member for Québec, who has once again focussed her talents of generosity and her unifying ability on social development.

I was here in this House when the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell indicated that he was somewhat taken aback by the Bloc Québécois's inability to support the social development bill. His reasoning was a bit thin, since there is no correlation between opposing the creation of a Department of Social Development and the vision of generous social programs we have for a sovereign Quebec.

Throughout the history of the Bloc Québécois, particularly its history here in Parliament, there have always been members who have been extremely concerned about the architecture or interface of social programs, and the best way to assist our fellow citizens who run into hard times for one reason or another.

The problem with the creation of the Department of Social Development is threefold.

It is hard to imagine a jurisdiction more sacred than social development when it comes to the development of Quebec. When we talk about social development, we mean everything that has to do with the health care system, social services, early childhood assistance, seniors, the homeless, and so forth. It is hard to imagine how the federal government could be in a better position to take care of these matters than the provinces, which are the main representatives.

It is even more frustrating because the former minister responsible for the homeless, whom I consider a kind-hearted person, had done me the honour of coming to Chic Resto Pop in the riding of Hochelaga—Maisonneuve. I am sure she has very fond memories of that visit unlike her colleague from Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, who was hit in the face with a pie, but I swear my office had nothing to do with it.

That said, the gist of our argument is this: how is the federal government better equipped to create and deliver social programs than the provincial government is? It is all the more difficult to understand why the federal government is creating this department when there are other areas it could be working on and is not.

I will give my two colleagues from Quebec an example. Since 1999, we have been waiting for the federal government to overhaul the Canadian Human Rights Act. This means that we do recognize that it has a valid constitutional jurisdiction in this matter. There is only one jurisdiction in Canada whose human rights code does not prohibit discrimination based on social condition, and that is the federal government. Social condition is important.

Adjournment Proceedings

Quebec, for instance, has had provisions banning discrimination based on social condition since 1977. These were used to file complaints when single parents were denied rental apartment accommodation, among others. Jurisprudence was established. Recognition for this reality increases as you go up the hierarchy in the judicial system.

Former Justice La Forest, who chaired a task force which tabled its report at the turn of the century, in 2000, urged the federal government to amend legislation which, in many regards, was archaic. One of the main recommendations made at the time was, of course, to include social condition in the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination.

• (1830)

Would it not have been wiser if, instead of dividing in two the Department of Human Resources Development, the federal government had amended, had updated the Canadian Human Rights Act, over which we recognize the federal government has a valid jurisdiction?

I could tell the House about—

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but he will have 15 minutes left when we resume debate on Bill C-22.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

CANADA BORDER SERVICES AGENCY

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Madam Speaker, the untimely, perhaps, unnecessary death of Adam Angel, 42 years old, a Canada customs border officer at Roosville in my constituency, has shone a light on the federal Liberals' systemic starvation of resources to protect our borders.

Customs inspectors from British Columbia and parts of Alberta will be converging at the Roosville border crossing tomorrow to protest safety and security conditions at the port. The death of Mr. Angel had a very traumatic effect on Canadian customs officers. The officers say the safety and security of Canada is simply not good enough. It certainly is not as it should be, and that is why they will be demonstrating. So what is the background?

On October 17, 2004 Adam should not have been working alone. He was fatally ill and struggled all night long and finally collapsed at 6 a.m. He died shortly after.

The situation highlights the dangerous situation that our border and customs agents are placed in when required to work alone. They are working alone up to 30% of the time.

Four days after his death, Mr. Angel's supervisor advised her superiors, "I do not know how long we will be able to sustain two CIs per shift, both financially and burnout wise, but I will keep at it

until I am directed to do otherwise". Unfortunately two weeks later, they were back to one person.

The Deputy Prime Minister told the House that all was well because her ministry was doing a study. I have copies of many studies. They detail faulty communication equipment, lack of training, and a total lack of resources.

One report called "Working Alone Strategy" analyzes 139 ports. Ninety-two sites, or 66%, reported technical difficulties with communication tools, with 40% of all sites reporting difficulties contacting their main office due to no one being in the main office or a breakdown in communication tools. There are inadequate safeguards, such as poor lighting, narrow counters, and doors that do not lock.

A previous border services report detailed work alone sites in remote areas. It also said that about 70% of these sites face technical difficulties with communication tools.

The ModuSpec report, "A Job Hazard Analysis", made 26 recommendations. In the two years since that report was released, only half of the recommendations have been acted on. The Canadian Customs Officers Critical Incident Summary Report profiles over 100 dangerous, life threatening events. The Paul Burkfolder report, the working alone strategy, reports, reports and recommendations, what else is needed?

All of these things were known prior to Adam Angel's death, yet little has happened. Why? Because of a lack of resources. At Roosville for example, there are 29 staff on the American side of the border compared to 10 employees on the Canadian side, which is why we cannot double shift. Is it any wonder officers are refusing to work alone?

Last month at 3 a.m. a customs inspector followed the CCRA policy to allow two dangerous looking individuals to proceed. He called the closest police who were more than one hour away from Roosville. He was told "Sorry, I can't come either because I'm working alone as well".

Today there was a headline, "We can't afford terror fight". Even if a threat is known, the RCMP report that they do not have enough staff to stop it. This is a chronic Liberal shortage.

It is dishonest to state that the Liberals have provided sufficient resources for border security. It is dishonouring to Mr. Angel's widow and family to imply that all is well. Once again the Liberals are saying one thing and are underperforming on the other. How can the U.S. take us seriously? More important, how can Canadians feel safe?

• (1835)

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise in response to the question put to the House by my hon. colleague, the member for Kootenay—Columbia, regarding his assertion that the government has neglected border security.

Adjournment Proceedings

I would first like to express my deepest sympathy to the family of Adam Angel, the Canada customs officer who died while on duty.

[*Translation*]

As my hon. colleague knows, the Canada Border Services Agency was established to consolidate customs, immigration, food inspection and border security functions. This agency relies on existing programs to speed up the flow of legitimate traffic across the border and to improve security so that persons and cargo posing a threat to our country are intercepted.

[*English*]

Since its creation, the safety and security of Canadians has never been compromised. Neither has the safety and security of employees of the Canada Border Services Agency. The health and safety of our employees is among the CBSA's highest priorities.

Far from ignoring our border agency, we have invested billions of dollars in the security of this country, much of which has been dedicated to our borders, be they land borders, sea ports or airports, to ensure the safety and security of Canadians.

As well as ensuring the safety of the Canadian public, the Canada Border Services Agency is taking measures to ensure the safety of its employees. Customs inspectors are equipped with tools to improve their health and safety while performing their duties. They also receive comprehensive training, which is repeated throughout their careers, to support the use of their equipment.

Management is taking extra measures to double-check equipment and support systems to ensure that customs inspectors have the required support when they need it. To resolve certain employee health and safety complaints from customs inspectors, the former Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, the CCRA, Human Resources Development Canada, Labour Canada and the Customs Excise Union Douanes Accise agreed that the Canada Revenue Agency would hire an independent consultant to conduct a job hazard analysis.

As part of this agreement, the CRA agreed to proceed with implementation of the job hazard analysis recommendations. Today the CBSA continues to implement the recommendations from the job hazard analysis and discussions with the union regarding the findings and recommendations. In addition, the CBSA is also working with Treasury Board to address the associated resource implications.

[*Translation*]

In summary, the government is serious about and committed to protecting the public at the border and it will take the necessary steps to do so.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Abbott: Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary's words ring very hollow in my constituency and with the Canada border customs inspectors. Those words are unbelievably shallow because the reality does not match the words.

The fact of the matter is that they are under-resourced. They are in perilous danger. It is the same thing as saying to a drug officer, "If you are going into a drug bust and things don't work out, just back

out of it". That is the policy of Canada customs. The interim policy of Canada customs states that if there is a problem, back out and look for resources. I just explained that earlier. The people who are listening to this parliamentary secretary will find his words mercilessly hollow.

• (1840)

Hon. Roy Cullen: Madam Speaker, when we deal with a human tragedy like this, it is never easy or simple. Of course, we mourn the loss of this life. As I pointed out, the job hazard analysis working alone strategy was commissioned in part to examine ways in which we can improve working conditions for the employees of the Canada Border Services Agency and improve their security. This strategy is a work in progress.

As I mentioned, the government has made a commitment to protect the safety and security of Canadians by forming a single integrated border agency. This agency is evolving and actively looking at all aspects of its operations in an effort to improve working conditions for its employees, including those who work alone, and to improve their security.

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am here tonight because I asked the government, a couple of weeks ago, about responding to the issue of the pine beetle infestation in the forests of British Columbia.

I purposely asked the minister of forests because of his long and excellent background in the forest industry. I believe that, of all the people on the Liberal benches, the minister of forests would be the one who would know the issue far more than any one of them or all collectively.

I asked the minister why the government had not responded, despite calls from the province of B.C., for assistance in mitigating the damage that the pine beetle infestation was causing in the forests of B.C.

At the present time there are approximately 300 million cubic metres of lodgepole pine in British Columbia that has been infected and killed by pine beetles. That number is expected to rise to 1 billion cubic metres of lodgepole pine, which is a major part of the softwood harvesting in British Columbia. To put it another way, by 2013, 80% of all the lodgepole pine trees in British Columbia will have been either killed or infected by the mountain pine beetle.

About two years ago, the B.C. minister of forests came to Ottawa with a five year plan. It was based on the assessments at that time. The minister asked the federal government to participate in this five year plan. The cost was about \$600 million. This was in order to mitigate the infestation, and participate in the reforestation. The province asked the government to join in.

Two years went by. The government did not respond in any way to that mitigation salvage plan. I want to ask the government, why not?

Adjournment Proceedings

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his question. It is a very well thought out and important question that he brings to the House on behalf of his constituents. All members of Parliament would agree that this is a massive and unfortunate act of nature. It will have quite an effect on British Columbia. We all join him in wanting to do anything we can.

The mountain pine beetle is the most serious pest of mature pine forests in western Canada. The current infestation in British Columbia is by far the largest on record. This is a massive infestation that is approaching 10 million hectares. That is an area larger than New Brunswick. Due to the scale of the infestation in an abundance of mature lodgepole pine, which is the insects' food source, complete control of the mountain pine beetle is not feasible. The only thing that will bring it under control is prolonged winter cold of minus 40 degrees for a number of days or an unseasonably cold fall snap.

However, this is not to say that the federal government has been sitting idly by, leaving the province on its own. The federal mountain pine beetle initiative, MPBI, announced in 2002, is a \$40 million, six year initiative, designed to complement the provincial MPB activities and is consistent with the federal mandate.

All the mountain pine beetle initiative programs are fully operational and are being delivered in close cooperation with provincial agencies and other federal departments. Federal officers have been located in beetle epidemic regions in B.C. to facilitate delivery of the MPBI programs.

The initiative includes research programs focused on reducing current infestation impacts and the risk of future beetle epidemics. This dovetails with the province's 10 year wood salvage plan. It funds research to estimate the commercial lifespan of beetle killed timber, how best to utilize the large volume of dead timber, the impacts of timber flow, changes on the forest dependent communities, and the ecological impacts of managing the beetle killed timber stands. This research effort will provide critical information to the province in support of its 10 year plan.

It should be noted that the forest land management is a provincial mandate and it is recognized that under the B.C. forest legislation, major forest licence holders are required to carry out reforestation at their own expense. The MPBI however, does include a suite of programs assisting beetle control and forest rehabilitation on federal land, that is, first nations reserve lands, federal parks and two large blocks of federal forest lands, as well as private, non-industrial forest lands. These rehabilitation efforts are again consistent with the federal mandate. This principle was established at the outset of discussions with B.C. officials.

The mountain pine beetle initiative reforestation segment allows the federal government to do what it can on lands that are outside the responsibility of the province. I would also point out that the officials from Natural Resources Canada continue to work in close collaboration with their provincial colleagues in B.C. and in Alberta in the development of decision support systems to guide effective beetle management across western Canada.

Finally, in the interests of setting the record straight, the federal minister did respond to B.C. Forest Minister Mike de Jong. In fact, as a result of the meeting between Mr. de Jong and his federal counterpart in 2002, bureaucrats from both levels of government developed the mountain pine beetle initiatives as a fitting response that was consistent with the federal mandate. I join my colleague in all the efforts to work on this problem.

• (1845)

Mr. Richard Harris: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for his little history lesson on the mountain pine beetle. Having lived in central B.C. where the main part of it started, I am well aware of the facts that he brought out.

The government has not recognized that this is a full-fledged natural disaster. It is not just some little bug that just happened along in B.C. This is in the same magnitude as the floods in Manitoba, the ice storm in Ontario and Quebec, and the floods in Saguenay. There the federal government recognized that they were in fact natural disasters.

This, which the government does not get, is as much of a natural disaster as any of those other examples. That is the issue. This is a natural disaster that is destroying the forests of British Columbia. It is destroying an industry in British Columbia that has contributed billions of dollars in tax revenue to the coffers of the federal government over the last many decades.

Two years ago the B.C. minister of forests came to Ottawa and asked for \$120 million. That member knows it. He got \$40 million. There is another 10 year plan needing \$800 million based on the new assessments. The government has a responsibility to respond to that request.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Madam Speaker, I am delighted to hear the member agrees with what I said in the beginning. This is a huge infestation, larger than in New Brunswick. It is a terrible crisis. As he said, it is a natural disaster. I believe we have been researching this since 1917. We are doing whatever we can.

In reply to the minister in 2002, we set up the program that I outlined in great detail. I would add the fact that the research and that program came after consultation with the province and with first nations. It is strategic, it is sound and it is practical to complement natural needs, in addition to providing the necessary information to allow the mills to use the timber that has been killed by the beetle.

We will continue to be dedicated to this very serious problem and do what we can in cooperation with our counterparts in the B.C. government.

Adjournment Proceedings

● (1850)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, I asked a question as to why the federal government was allowing the Province of Ontario to force municipalities and small businesses into chlorinating their water when the 1993 Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement commits Canada to reducing the amount of chlorinated byproducts in our drinking water. The representative for the minister said that it was nice that I was interested.

In October 1994, the federal government developed the chlorinated substances action plan to prune the chlorine tree. Despite this and the evidence to the contrary that environmentally friendly alternatives exist, the federal government, in partnership with the Liberal Party of Ontario, is forcing businesses to spend millions of dollars on water treatment systems that they cannot afford to use. It is doing so without regard for the environment and without regard to people's health.

The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, which was signed by Canada and the United States, commits Canada to reducing the amount of cancer causing chlorination byproducts, including the Great Lakes watershed.

The sixth biennial report under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement in 1978 to the Governments of Ontario, the United States, Canada and the state and provincial governments of the Great Lakes Basin was delivered in 1993. In it, the Water Quality Board developed a working list of 362 chemicals confirmed to be present in the water, the sediment or the biota of the Great Lakes Basin.

Approximately half of these substances are synthetic chlorinated organic substances. In addition, there are other chlorinated organic substances entering the environment that have not yet been separately identified. Even though many of the substances have not been proven to be individually toxic, it is likely that many of these chemicals, because of their chemical characteristics, will be identified as persistent toxics and hence substances to be virtually eliminated to zero discharge.

There is a growing body of evidence that these compounds are at best foreign to maintaining ecosystem integrity and quite probably persistent, toxic and harmful to human health. They are produced in conjunction with proven persistent toxic substances. Thus, it is prudent and indeed necessary to treat these substances as a class rather than a series of individual chemicals.

Further, in many cases alternative production processes do exist.

This approach raises the question as to whether or not the use of chlorine, the common precursor for the production of chlorinated organic substances, should be sunset. We know that when chlorine is used as a feedstock in a manufacturing process one cannot necessarily predict or control which chlorinated organics will result and in what quantity.

Accordingly, the commission concluded that the use of chlorine and its compounds should be avoided in the manufacturing process. It recognizes that the socio-economic and other consequences of banning the use of chlorine and the subsequent use of alternative

chemicals or processes might be considered in determining that timetable.

The issue of cleaning up the Great Lakes concerns the United States. The head of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Mr. Michael Leavitt, chaired a cabinet level task force. The Great Lakes cleanup has become a national priority in the United States. The U.S. general accounting office found last year that 33 federal and 17 state programs spent more than \$1.7 billion on cleanup efforts.

Canada is in no position to lecture the United States over environmental issues when lack of action by the federal government means it is hampering efforts by the U.S. to clean up the Great Lakes. Canada-U.S. relations are troubled enough without adding another item to the list of irritants.

In keeping with the political structure of Canada, a federal strategic pollution prevention program was developed in cooperation with the provinces.

Hon. Robert Thibault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Government of Canada shares the member's view on the importance of protecting the health of Canadians and ensuring that our drinking water is safe. As we know, the presence of bacteria, viruses and protozoa in drinking water represents the greatest risk to human health from drinking water. The Walkerton tragedy and the North Battleford incidents are clear evidence of this.

All governments, both nationally and internationally, recognize that the elimination of these microbiological contaminants is the top priority in treating drinking water. Chlorine and other disinfection techniques, along with good management practices, eliminate this risk.

[*Translation*]

There are potential health risks, including cancer, associated with disinfection techniques. These risks, from long term exposure to relatively high levels of disinfectant byproducts, have been documented in numerous scientific studies such as the 1995 study entitled, "Great Lakes Basin Cancer Risk Assessment".

Our objective is and will continue to be to reduce the severity of these risks to the health of Canadians or to eliminate them altogether.

● (1855)

[*English*]

I would first like to make it clear that Health Canada and its provincial and territorial partners, represented on the committee on drinking water, developed the guidelines for Canadian drinking water quality as the basis for ensuring the safety of drinking. A focus of their work is developing guidelines for disinfectant by-products including these associated with chlorine.

The existing and proposed guidelines are protective of human health. In addition, the application of the guidelines is designed to minimize the formation of by-products. This includes applying additional treatment processes to remove the organic matter that would react to the chlorine to form by-products.

Adjournment Proceedings

[*Translation*]

Second, it is important to understand that other treatment processes, such as UV radiation or ozonation, are increasingly encouraged and used in new and modernized treatment plants across Canada, like in other countries around the world.

[*English*]

It is important to understand that the use of ozone or UV does not eliminate the need for chlorine or related chemicals to be used as a secondary disinfectant that will work throughout the distribution system. Ozone and UV are effective at the treatment plant, but do not prevent subsequent growth of microorganisms in the water as it is held and transported through the distribution system to people's homes. It is always necessary to use chlorine or a similar chemical to maintain a residual disinfectant in the distribution system.

In addition, ozonation is known to also create disinfectant by-products which can pose health risks. While UV is an excellent and relatively new technology for treating water, its effectiveness and efficiency are greatly reduced by the presence of high levels of organic matter in the source water.

Third, we must no longer rely on treatment alone. All governments nationally and internationally are adopting multi-barrier approaches for protecting drinking water.

[*Translation*]

This source to tap approach means protecting water sources to avoid drinking water contamination, or cleaning up existing pollution, which is one of the main objectives of the Great Lakes water quality agreement.

[*English*]

Provinces, territories and the federal government have endorsed this comprehensive approach and are putting it in place. A good example is Ontario's development of source water protection plants and initiatives under the Canada-Ontario agreement.

In summary, the quality of Canada's drinking water is among the best in the world but more remains to be done to ensure that it is protected in the future.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, the concern of residents in my riding and of Canadians who are committed to a healthy environment and clean water in the Great Lakes is the decision by the federal government not to enforce the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

The regulation of toxic chemicals is a federal responsibility. The province of Ontario is expanding the use of chlorine with no consideration for the environment. Not only is the federal government allowing this to occur, federal dollars are being used through cost shared programs to fund this expanded use of chlorine.

Trihalomethanes, THMs, are chlorination by-products that are formed as a result of chlorination of organic material present in raw water supplies. Human studies are suggesting a link between exposure to THMs and colorectal cancers. It goes on to identify a link between reproductive and developmental outcomes caused by these chlorination by-products.

The Canada-Ontario Infrastructure Program is being used to pay for an increased use of a toxic chemical that has been demonstrated by the federal government's own funded studies to cause cancer and reproductive defects.

This must concern all parliamentarians.

• (1900)

Hon. Robert Thibault: Madam Speaker, the federal government has taken a very productive approach to this problem. We began by looking at the integrated system of water management within Canada and the ecosystem approach. We have made huge investments in improving the infrastructure. We recognize that where the rubber hits the road it is usually a municipal responsibility to operate the plants. There is provincial involvement also.

Through the infrastructure program where we have created the investment of over \$20 billion in the country with our partners, we favoured the green projects of water and sewer, elements that improve the whole ecosystem, airborne particulates that go into the water, the quality of the rivers and lakes, the water that we take out of them and the treatment plants that we are working on.

I just returned from Yarmouth where modern technology was used to improve a 100 year old plant so that it now uses a lot less chlorine than it did in the past. Cutting edge technologies were used at a very affordable price but it required a massive infusion of cash and the federal government was very pleased to participate.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7 p.m.)

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