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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, February 17, 2005

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, February 17, 2005

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*English*]

REPORT ON GOVERNANCE OF CROWN CORPORATIONS

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as part of an effort to provide parliamentarians and Canadians with the most comprehensive review of crown corporations governance in over 20 years, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, a report entitled “Review of the Governance Framework for Canada’s Crown Corporations: Meeting the Expectations of Canadians”.

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CERTIFICATE OF NOMINATION

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 110(2), I am tabling a certificate of nomination with respect to the national round table on the environment and the economy. This certificate stands referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration on citizenship issues.

In November 2004, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons asked for recommendations from all committees regarding the prior parliamentary review of order in council appointments falling under their mandate, and this report lays out a procedure on how this can be accomplished.

The committee has adopted a motion that calls on the government to develop a transparent and accessible standing committee review process for all government appointments which establishes skills

based criteria for appointments and requires each nominee to demonstrate that their skills meet the established criteria.

* * *

• (1005)

PETITIONS

MARRIAGE

Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present, on behalf of the constituents of Wetaskiwin and others in central Alberta, a petition calling upon Parliament to respect the definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

They point out that this honourable House passed a motion to that effect in June of 1999, and they request that Parliament affirm the legislation recognizing the institution of marriage in federal law as being the union of one man and one woman.

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to introduce three petitions.

The first two petitions are from citizens in my riding stating that because the majority of Canadians support the current legal definition of marriage as a voluntary union of a single, that is unmarried, male and a single, that is unmarried, female, it is the duty of Parliament to ensure that marriage is defined as Canadians wish it to be defined.

DIABETES

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition from the citizens asking that the support of the federal funding for juvenile type I diabetes research be done by the government so young people can be helped.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition today to the House signed by a number of Canadians, including from my own riding of Mississauga South, and it has to do with the definition of marriage.

The petitioners would like to draw to the attention of the House that they believe that the majority of Canadians believe that the fundamental matters of social policy should be decided by elected members of Parliament and not the unelected judiciary, and also that it is their view that Parliament’s duty is to ensure that marriage continues to be defined as Canadians wish it to be defined.

Points of Order

Therefore they call upon Parliament to use all possible legislative and administrative measures, including the invocation of section 33 of the charter, referred to as the notwithstanding clause, if necessary, to preserve and protect the current definition of marriage, which is the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

* * *

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. 9 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 9—**Mr. Brian Pallister:**

With regard to hospitality expenditures by the staff of the president and chief Executive officer of Canada Post from 1999 until 2003, including an itemized list of each expenditure: (a) what was the amount of each expenditure; (b) who was present when each expenditure was incurred; (c) exactly what good(s) and/or services(s) were included in each expenditure; (d) where was each expense incurred; and (e) what was the purpose of the meeting during which the expense was incurred?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the period of 1999 until 2003, Canada Post's president and chief executive officer staff consisted of an administrative assistant and a support officer. Over this period, three individuals held the position of administrative assistant and two individuals worked as support staff.

Canada Post Corporation's policy on hospitality expenditures provides as follow:

Entertainment expenses incurred, while in travel status, include attendance at events where a business discussion takes place with a customer during, immediately before, or immediately after the event.

Subject to prior approval, employees will be reimbursed for entertaining customers:

if the person entertained has a potential or actual business relationship with the company; or

if the expenditure directly precedes, includes or follows a business discussion that would benefit the company.

The staff of the president and chief executive officer during this period did not incur such expenses given the nature of their work.

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, discussions have taken place between all parties and I believe that you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That at the conclusion of the present debate on today's opposition motion, all questions necessary to dispose of this motion be deemed put, a recorded division

deemed requested and deferred until the end of government orders on Tuesday, February 22, 2005.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst have the consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

STUDY OF BILL C-23

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to submit to you that recently there was a procedural mistake which took place during the clause by clause study of Bill C-23, which could have an impact on the business of the House.

I specifically ask you to look into the rulings of the chair on the subject of the requirement of a royal recommendation, even where there is a previous statutory authority.

If I can summarize the facts of the situation as I understand them, there was a meeting on clause by clause consideration of Bill C-23 on February 10. Certain amendments were proposed that day by the member for Chambly—Borduas. Specifically, I refer to the minutes which state:

●(1010)

[Translation]

Clause 20,

Yves Lessard moved: That Bill C-23, in Clause 20, be amended by replacing line 32 on page 6 with the following:

“consisting of seventeen commissioners to be appointed by the”

Debate arose thereon.—

The Chair ruled the proposed amendment inadmissible because it infringes on the financial prerogative of the Crown, as provided on page 656 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*.

[English]

The chair ruled then, and ruled again today when I attended the meeting, that the proposed amendment to increase the number of commissioners in the bill was outside the scope due to the lack of a royal recommendation.

I submit that the chair and the committee staff failed to take into account the ruling made by Speaker Parent on February 12, 1998 when deciding on the admissibility of the amendment from the member for Chambly—Borduas. I submit a copy of his short ruling.

The crux of the ruling is that a royal recommendation is not required for an initiative for which there is already a statutory authority.

In the case of Bill C-23, I submit that there is a statutory authority for a set number of commissioners. I submit that an additional royal recommendation is not required for the numbers of commissioners to be changed, even expanded, so long as there is existing statutory authority.

I specifically call your attention to Erskine May, 21st edition, page 717 under paragraph (c)(6), which states that a Queen's recommendation is not needed for an expenditure covered by an existing authority, including:

Widening the jurisdiction of a court or creating offences although they may have the effect of increasing the costs of the administration of justice.

That is the quote relied upon by Speaker Parent in his ruling.

In this case the member for Chambly—Borduas was attempting to widen the membership of the board from 4 to 17. I submit that this proposed amendment was in order and that the committee should be given the opportunity to consider this amendment in clause by clause on Bill C-23.

Mr. Speaker, I am aware of your rulings on committees that state that committees must be and remain masters of their own affairs, and of course I respect that ruling, but unless we can have clarity on the admissibility of this amendment, I do not see how we can proceed with the legislation should it be reported back this week, which is the current plan of the committee.

I therefore ask you to rule on the admissibility of the amendment and transmit your ruling to the chair of the committee before the committee reports, which has already been done and we have agreed to present it today in the House of Commons. However I hope you will give us a decision that will reflect the decision of Speaker Parent in 1998.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my address concerns the same point of order raised by my friend from Acadie—Bathurst. This is indeed a very serious procedural question. Allow me to explain.

You know that we currently have 22 operational parliamentary committees. One of their main activities is clause by clause study of various bills. Another function, which has fallen to committees is the consideration of certain reports and certain questions, the manner of which is left to the committees.

I do not intend to elaborate on this latter mandate of the committees, but rather on their primary mandate, which is the clause by clause study of bills referred to them by the House. We must have more ample instructions from the Chair on matters that entail monetary commitments on the part of the government, which are not amendable by the committees. This would facilitate the whole task. We must in fact draw a distinction with a private member's bill that involves a monetary expenditure. We realize that private members' business involving are not in order.

As for the purpose of a bill, however, at the time of clause by clause study, it is clear that there are monetary implications. I am informed that the chair of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities has decided that this could not be amended because money was involved.

Points of Order

Consequently, Mr. Speaker, it is for this reason that your decision is important. If committees cannot amend clauses dealing with financial commitments, you will understand the difficulty in justifying the continued existence of parliamentary committees. What will be the use of having them if they cannot amend clauses that have a monetary impact?

That is why I support the point of order raised by my friend from Acadie—Bathurst.

• (1015)

[English]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have not had an opportunity, as the first I heard of the point of order from the member for Acadie—Bathurst was moments ago. It is an important issue. We, from the government perspective, have not had a great deal of time to reflect on precisely the nature of what the member for Acadie—Bathurst is attempting to achieve.

However, Mr. Speaker, you and many of your predecessors have maintained that committees are masters of their own domain. From our perspective, you have been very clear on numerous occasions in ruling that committees within their own domain are masters of their own proceedings.

Mr. Speaker, I would urge you to consider carefully what the member for Acadie—Bathurst has asked. We look forward to your ruling.

[Translation]

The Speaker: I would like to express the speaker's appreciation for the point of order raised by the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst, the comments by the hon. member for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, and the comments by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader.

In my opinion, we must now consider the situation. I note that the committee has already reported the bill to the House, which is now at report stage. I do not know whether any amendments in connection with the proposals attempted in committee. In any case, I will review the situation very shortly, and perhaps get back to the House later to inform you of my decision.

[English]

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am the vice-chair of the committee. I just want to provide the further information that the appeal to the House does not have the support of other members of the committee. The committee felt that it completed its business in a proper manner. We noted that there was a protest coming forward but that it really is from that member and that party only and does not have the support of the other members of the committee, especially the chair of the committee and me as the vice-chair.

Supply

● (1020)

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, I want to go on record that it is not who agreed to or did not agree to, but what are the rules? It is important, Mr. Speaker, that you make a decision on the rules only.

The Speaker: Perhaps the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst could clear up something for me. Was there an appeal of the chairman's ruling in the committee that was decided by the committee?

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup wants to respond to this question.

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was in fact on the committee. The chair's ruling was appealed and upheld by a majority vote.

I believe that this matter goes beyond the internal rules of a committee. In fact, all government operations, ultimately, are being called into question. If this practice, this precedent, is important and definitive, it would alter the whole validity of each committee. So a ruling on this would be important regardless.

However, an appeal of the decision was called for, and the decision upheld by a majority vote.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, I personally attended the committee meetings this week. I wanted to present the ruling by Speaker Parent, and the chair refused to hear anything about it. She said that the matter was closed and that she did not want to hear it.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to comment on this because I have had a similar experience. The fact is that the chair of any committee, and in fact all the members of a committee, do rely on table officers to provide them with advice; we can only assume. But when there is a challenge, the challenge then is a challenge which is voted on by the committee members without the knowledge of the rules. We should not get away from the fact that if there was an error in the advice of the table officers to the chair or to the committee then there must be a remedy to rectify it.

I also wanted to rise because I am also aware that this problem was brought to the attention of the Table prior to returning the bill from committee and reporting that bill to the House. I would like to know more about that, because if that bill had not been tabled there could have been a report stage motion tabled in time. Once the bill is tabled, and with, I believe, the restrictions on the timeframe of submitting report stage motions, it could have been a frustration of the opportunity to correct or remedy a possible error at committee. It has happened where bills will have report stage within 48 hours of being reported to the House.

I do believe that this is much more than a dispute between parties. I think the fundamental question appears to be whether or not there was an error in ruling or judgment on behalf of the table officers advising a committee.

The Speaker: I point out to the hon. member for Mississauga South that amendments cannot be moved in the House to a bill at report stage until the bill has been reported from the committee, so I think he has that order incorrect in his argument.

The amendments can be presented now. The bill is not being called today on report stage, so amendments can be submitted until that happens. We will see what happens in terms of proposed amendments that members submit for report stage consideration on this bill.

With respect to the committee proceedings, I will examine the record. I thank the hon. members for their answers to the questions.

[*Translation*]

I hope that I will be able to come back to the House soon with an answer and a ruling on this important point of order.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1025)

[*English*]

SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should recognize the public health impacts of smog and the failure of voluntary emission standards by legislating mandatory improvements to vehicle efficiency in all classes of light duty vehicles sold in Canada.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I feel as if I have been a runner poised in the starting blocks for the last 25 minutes. I hope those watching CPAC have been as riveted by this morning's procedural debate as I have.

We are about to enter into an important debate today around a number of key issues for the government, for this minority Parliament and for the future of all Canadians. I would like to touch on a number of key topics this morning, around leadership and promises made and promises broken for all Canadians. This is about the health of Canadians and the health of our economy. It is about policy and the role of government in making policy to maintain the health of Canadians and the health of our economy.

I am very proud to stand here today. I had full intentions and hopes that our leader would be able to present this motion, as this is one of the key reasons he entered the political realm. His disappointment in not being here is great, but I am sure the House will be happy to know that he is recuperating well and is continuing to push the government for some serious action around climate change in this country.

With respect to leadership and vision about where this country needs to go, the Liberal Party of Canada presented its now infamous red book to Canadians in 1993, with a whole series of promises. Most of them, we now know, have been broken outright.

In particular, there was a promise made around greenhouse gas emissions. Yesterday we heard the tone in the House on the most auspicious day of the Kyoto accord coming into effect, where all parties rose, opposition parties at least, and denounced the government for its lack of planning, lack of foresight and readiness for this most important agreement. The parliamentary secretary called it a day of celebration. I am not sure the minister would agree with him after yesterday's debate.

Supply

It was not a celebratory mood in the House. It was a mood of frustration shared by all opposition parties and by Canadians over the lack of basic advancement and planning on the Kyoto file. When we look at auto emissions in this country, we see yet another example of lack of foresight, planning and vision on the part of the Liberal government.

We brought this motion forward today to raise the debate to the next level, to remove the rhetoric and start to talk about the actual numbers, the important numbers facing Canadians each and every day as they make decisions about the way they move themselves around this country, about the health of their communities and cities, about the smog, about the important things facing Canadians and not the rhetoric and broken promises that we have heard in election after election.

We know that light duty vehicles are very important with respect to greenhouse gas emissions. We know there is an important part to be played by the car manufacturers of this country in responding to the pollution problem that is facing Canadians each and every day, these serious effects of pollution that we are seeing in our hospital wards and schools as young Canadians face increasing health risks from the very air we breathe.

Twenty-five per cent of all greenhouse gas emissions come from this sector, about half of that from the vehicles we are going to be talking about today. Clearly, a significant part of any solution that we are going to arrive at comes from this sector. Looking for the innovation and leadership around this important issue in terms of mandatory fuel requirements is important for us all.

I am happy to share a note that was passed to me yesterday, which states that we already have support from a number of corners of the House. The chief critic for the Conservative Party of Canada, the member for Red Deer, in a response to a questionnaire from the Sierra Club in the last federal election, committed his support to mandatory regulation of car fuel efficiency standards. This is fantastic. This is good to hear. We will be looking for support from that party today for our motion, which clearly outlines the very same thing.

We have spoken to a number of members of the Bloc who also seem supportive of this notion of finally responding to the needs that Canadians have been expressing for many years, of finally responding to the promise made by the Liberal Party and never acted upon. We have seen that voluntary standards just do not make it. We have not arrived.

In 1993 the Liberal Party promised a 20% reduction in greenhouse gases. It got the number right, but it got the plus-minus sign wrong: we have seen a 20% increase in greenhouse gas emissions in this country.

An hon. member: Shameful.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Absolutely shameful.

We think we have found a way that makes sense for Canadians and the auto sector to step into the new economy and into a future that we can be proud of for all Canadians.

● (1030)

Some people dispute the seriousness of smog. I would like to quote a few numbers for members so they will understand how important this is to Canadians as they go about their daily business. The Ontario Medical Association states that 2,000 deaths per year in Ontario alone can be attributed to smog. The Government of Canada estimates 5,000 deaths a year attributable to smog, almost five times the rate of murder in the country.

Clearly, this is of significance to Canadians and to their health. These are statistics of the people who finally succumbed to the health effects of smog, never mind the people who suffer through the respiratory illnesses and asthma. In many of the major cities smog days are now being seen in February, of which was previously unheard.

We need to do something about the vehicles that drive through our cities. We need to imagine a future in which commuting to and from work or bringing our children to school will not harm us or our children. We need to imagine a future when we can walk to the House of Commons and not see vehicles idling in front of the House. It would be a novel concept for the government to take on. We need to identify a culture within the House, within the representatives of the country. We must do something about the increasing amount of smog throughout our cities.

Months ago the Canadian Automotive Partnership Council tabled the need for a national auto policy, and we are still waiting. If the government had the leadership and understood what Canadians needed and wanted, a national auto policy would include some of the suggestions that we will hear today. With the lack of leadership in the auto sector and a lack of clarity and certainty in where the government views the auto sector going in the future, we will continue to have greater uncertainty. This hurts business. This hurts investors looking to invest in this marketplace because they do not know where the government wants the auto sector to go. It does not know what profitable partnerships we can form with the auto sector.

In 1982 the House and Senate looked at mandatory regulations. The auto sector said not to do it, that it would voluntarily comply. It said that there was no need to force it because it would get there eventually. Therefore, the bill was never passed into law.

In 2002, according to Transport Canada, there has been regular violations of the voluntary agreement. This is the problem with a voluntary agreement. Not only do we not get reports on this because it is voluntary, but if someone breaks the agreement, there is no consequence to it. If we had a voluntary law against murder, depending on the circumstances, would we find out if people were being prosecuted for their crimes? We need to get serious about this. Waiting for the Liberal government's inaction on this file is no longer acceptable to Canadians.

An hon. member: It's like *Waiting for Godot*.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: *Waiting for Godot* and others. We might need to rename this Liberal Party.

Supply

Many people say that we should not have mandatory regulations because this will hurt the auto sector, that this will drive jobs away from Canada. Drive jobs away to where? We know that California is looking at strict emissions as well as New York, Illinois and Maine. The United States is one of our main locations for export. These states are all looking at the same regulations. That is where many of our cars go. That is the market to which we look. Clearly, the industry is moving toward lower emissions coming out of the tailpipes of cars. How could this drive jobs away when the very people who will be buying these cars will also be under a regulatory regime?

Canada needs to be at the forefront of this. Canada needs to look to the future. We cannot go forward looking back. We need to look at what the sector and consumers want. I searched the websites of Toyota and Honda for hybrid options, and there are waiting lists. Imagine the businesses in Canada that would like to have waiting lists for their products, that would like to have people lined up in queue or putting deposits down on their products. Clearly, there is a market for these cars.

Canadians clearly enjoy the concept of not only of polluting less as they drive to and fro, but also paying less at the pump. Our party has recommended taking the GST off these cars to help consumers out at the front end.

● (1035)

I know a number of people in the auto sector who sell cars. The appeal they make to their consumers is this. While the car may cost them \$2,000 to \$3,000 more, they will recoup that cost in a few months, in a year to two years, depending on the original consumption of a normal car. After that time they will make money off the price of the car, while helping the environment, and having a clear conscience about what they are doing.

Taxi companies are coming on line and offering hybrid options. If Canadians had a choice between a hybrid vehicle or one that pollutes more, I wager that most Canadians would choose a hybrid taxi. They would feel better about the trip and about the day. Taxi companies certainly feel better about it. They make more money because they pay less at the pump.

The government has decided another tactic, which is the usual one of throwing money at an issue. It hires a comedian, puts together a \$26 million package and calls it the "One Tonne Challenge". Then it tries to convince Canadians that it is their responsibility to lose a little weight, that it is within their jurisdiction and that it is their fault where we are today. The responsibility clearly rests in the hands and homes of Canadians. If they do not find their way to it, then I guess it is all their fault.

The government completely ignores its role and responsibility in this. To enter into a major international agreement with 140 other countries as of yesterday without a significant plan speaks to the greatest irresponsibility ever. It speaks to the lack of commitment, focus and ability within the cabinet to work out a plan, to find out where the sector can benefit, where our economy can grow and where we can do better by our environment and for the health of Canadians. Instead the government stumbled in backwards to yesterday's most auspicious and celebratory date without a plan.

The only announcement is that it will be embarrassed in Montreal in November, when the world comes to Canada to fully describe to Canadians how badly we have done on the environment. We can only hope that there is not a smog day in Montreal during the COP11. Aside from that circumstance, the government has completely failed. We know Canadians were believing and hoping that the government had taken the horse by the bit on the environment, but it has completely failed to do that.

A lot of people decry regulations in general. They say that we should not regulate business, that we should allow the free flow of commerce and that businesses will find their own way. The report from Transport Canada has said that the mandatory emission requirements Ottawa has come forward with are not sufficient and that it is breaking those commitments. That is tragic.

I remind the House to hearken back to the debates when seat belts, air bags and unleaded fuel were being suggested as regulations. Some in the auto sector brought forward the same arguments that jobs would be lost if there were seat belt regulations or because air bags were too expensive, it would drive jobs out of the country. Now we find the sector proudly advertising the effectiveness of seat belts, air bags and the efficiency of cars.

The sector finds some benefit in being able to approach consumers and say that they will be safe in their cars. Within every sector there are more progressive elements and there are lesser progressive elements. We need to reward those who seek to be more progressive on this. We need to reward those manufacturers that have decided to look the future, that have decided to say to Canadians and world that they can produce vehicles that are better for the environment and better for money in their pockets.

The government will try to table the greatest green budget in history, yet to be seen, and another promise. What Canadians and members of House have to ask themselves is this. Is there a level of trust with the Liberal government, after the number of broken promises with respect to the environment, that a green budget will actually be a green budget?

The government said that it had spent \$3.7 billion on Kyoto so far. Then we found out that was allocated and it had not been spent. Did we get good value for our money? The government is not sure of that either. It does not know if the money already has been effective. Clearly not. Emissions are getting higher and higher. We need to become more determined and much stricter with the way we deal with our environment.

We seek support for this motion from all four corners of the House.

● (1040)

I have spoken to members from all four parties who find within their own constituencies a great concern and a need to be proud of the way we are developing our auto sector. They want to be proud to get into their cars. They want to feel good about purchasing another vehicle.

Saving Canadians money means more money in the economy. It means more purchasing. It increases the GDP. When we put more money into the pockets of Canadians, that has a ripple effect on the economy.

The NDP, under the leadership of our leader, has made recommendations. We have said that we need to put more money into the hands of Canadians with respect to cars. We need to offer them a subsidy when they purchase cars. They will recoup the costs through fuel. For low and middle income families, how much money they put in the tanks is a huge part of their weekly and monthly budgets. Reducing that by 22%, 23%, 24% and upwards, depending on the type of vehicle, is a huge savings for those families. They then can take that money and put it into an educational savings account or buy better food for their families, rather than put it into the fuel tank and pollute the air.

Today, we will attempt to step away from the rhetoric and talk about the real numbers. Today, we will spend our time, ideally, talking about what is good for Canadians.

Canadians have been demanding change in this file for a number of years. The auto sector has said that it will meet it through voluntary measures. The time has come and gone. The time has come for the government and the House to make directive policy that makes sense for consumers, that makes sense for the health of Canadians and that makes sense for the sector. It has to make sense for the sector so it can export its technology and its products to emerging markets around the world.

If anyone in the House has any notion that we can have the developing world come on line with the same consumption patterns that we have and maintain any semblance of an environment, they are obviously dipping into something they should not be dipping into. We cannot have China and India, with their massive middle classes, consuming and polluting at the rates we have over the last number of years.

We need to be at the forefront of this, not the international pariahs as we have been. The OECD ranks us last. There are two countries that pollute more per capita than Canada, the United States being one. Under George Bush, the Americans have done far more on climate change, as 39 states move toward their Kyoto commitments, than the Prime Minister has. The Prime Minister has not found his way to achieving even the small measures of success that the Americans have under George W. Bush, who is no great friend of the environmental lobby. I am not sure if he attends its galas very often.

However, under the direction of the Prime Minister, the Liberal government and three majority governments where all the power was in a few hands, they have been unable to find their way to the progressive changes suggested in this motion.

We need to look to the future. We need to look to the leadership that Canadians are asking us to hold, the responsibility that Canadians are asking us to take along with them in solving and meeting our challenges under Kyoto and meeting our responsibility to future generations.

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam, CPC): Madam Speaker, I hope the member will get his pencil out because I have a number of questions for him which I hope will be answered during the day.

His motion states, “legislating mandatory improvements to vehicle efficiency in all classes of light duty vehicles sold in Canada”. We already have all kinds of controls and standards in

Supply

Canada. I want to know, specifically, what are the benchmarks he complaining about?

He mentioned about a GST rebate for some vehicles that perhaps have a good mileage rate. However, is he also secretly talking about penalties on certain cars? We have had that in British Columbia.

What kind of pollution is he talking about? Is he talking about NO_x and MOX and real poisons or is he talking about CO₂ and water vapour that is related to Kyoto? I heard him falsely mixing smog and poisons in the environment and real pollution with Kyoto and climate change. The two are not the same. Anyone knows that. Again, what does he mean by “light duty vehicles”? That certainly has to be defined.

Is he referring to the California standards for all of Canada? Let him be specific. To what plan and schedule is referring?

The current laws in Canada already conform to his motion. We could accept this motion because we could say it already exists in Canada. What specifically is he asking for? Where are we going? If he truly wants to advance the results for the environment, he better have a plan and he better have a schedule, rather than just railing against cars. What are the numbers and where are they? Where are we going to go with this motion?

• (1045)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his excitable question. The motion has brought forward a great amount of ire. I am looking to the motion to find out where the great amount of fear is and the specifics of what the member is describing.

The member asked what our plans are and what devious contraptions we have hidden within the motion. The motion is as it stands. The voluntary regime that has existed within Canada has not worked according to the government's own reports. We are asking that the voluntary regime be mandatory.

In terms of the numbers, this is what the debate actually entails. What are the numbers that the sector can live with? What are the numbers that most benefit Canadians?

In terms of the California emission standards, California has done a great deal in helping the environment and in helping to develop a new sector. Looking at what sectors actually have sustained an economy while building these emission standards is very important. Light duty vehicles is a class of vehicles that we have designated in Canada.

In terms of the member's question, the basic premise of the motion is to move from voluntary toward mandatory. In terms of the actual numbers, clearly the auto sector has to believe that the government and the House of Commons are committed to bringing in mandatory requirements.

Supply

Since 1982 the spirit has not been there. The auto sector knows it does not need to do it because it is voluntary. If the auto sector can continue on a voluntary basis, there is no need to make the significant changes we are asking for and which we know can be met. The auto sector itself has indicated that it has the improvements on the shelf for 17% of the changes.

Clearly, the point of the motion is a mandatory regime rather than a voluntary one because the voluntary one is no longer working.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first, I want to say that, naturally, the Bloc Québécois supports the motion made by my NDP colleague. However, I find it is somewhat of a catch all and vague. It is impossible to oppose such a proposal, the aim of which is to increase the efficiency of light duty vehicles. However, why did my colleague not specify the level of efficiency he intends to propose to government?

The government's climate change plan of November 2002 mentions a 25% improvement in vehicle fuel efficiency, which is not even mentioned in my colleague's motion. This improvement would lead to a 5.2 megatonne reduction in greenhouse gas.

I am in complete agreement with my colleague's motion, but would it not have been more advantageous and accurate to specify in his motion that he is seeking a 25% improvement for light duty vehicles in Canada?

[*English*]

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question and a fair observation.

The most important aspect of the motion is that it creates the framework for the negotiations between the Government of Canada and the auto sector to say that voluntary standards are no longer an option, that it must move toward the mandatory.

The reason there is a need for an auto policy in Canada is that clearly we do not have one. In the absence of one, the industry has little direction as to where it needs to head with respect to the policy of the government.

If the government came forward and said that as a result of a motion in the House and under the direction of the Canadian people, there will be mandatory emission standards, the number would then be set in conjunction with our partners in the auto sector. Clearly we need to have a number that answers our environmental commitments and allows the sector to survive, while meeting consumers' needs. What consumers need is something better at the pump; they need something better coming out of the tailpipe.

The motion sets the framework for that in saying that voluntary is no longer an option, that it must be mandatory. Then we would work with our partners in the auto sector and the unions to arrive at the numbers, depending upon the vehicle and class.

• (1050)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as opposed to suggesting that the motion raises ire on our side, this is a tremendous motion for two reasons. First, this is basically what we are doing already in going toward those goals. Second, it gives us the chance

throughout the day to explain all sorts of programs, successes and regulations that we have put in place with respect to the Kyoto goals.

I have great respect for the member. He is a great analyst and a great parliamentarian. I was astonished that he would suggest that Canadians should not have any role, that they are not interested in reducing greenhouse gases. It is a very small part of our plan. We are working with auto companies and large emitters and industry, but a small part is that Canadians want to help out. We are showing them some ways they might do that. I am surprised that he thinks Canadians are not interested in helping out or having guidance on how to help out.

People are constantly saying there is no plan. The member has been saying that. People should know that in October 2000 there was a \$500 million Government of Canada action plan 2000 on climate change. It is amazing that members in the House who are interested in climate change, especially the critics, are not aware of the plan. There was a second plan to improve it in November 2002, the climate change plan of Canada. In August 2003 there was another \$1 billion announced.

In talking about our selling greenhouse gas reducing coal technologies to China and that it is one of the worst polluters, the member talked about our being one of the worst polluters in the world. However, we are third out of 12 in improvement of energy in the 1990s as decided by the International Energy Agency.

Just to make sure that people are aware of the issue of auto emissions today, I would like to ask the member some questions, and he can answer any one of them, just to ensure that the critics, the ones who should know the most, are up to speed on this topic.

On January 1 this year we introduced new sulphur reduction emissions as the opposition said. How much will that reduce sulphur emissions? Roughly how many lives did the federal-provincial study on that say it would save?

We are going to reduce smog by a large amount by 2010. Approximately what percentage of auto emission smog will be reduced by 2010 by the many regulations that Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition has said that we already have in place?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the government is asking me to analyze the effectiveness of its own policies. Clearly if the plans that the hon. member mentioned were effective, we would not have had a 20% increase instead of the promised 20% decrease.

We talk about the plan constantly. Yesterday was the day for the plan to come into force. Yesterday was the day of the exam and the students did not show up. They were still cramming for the exam. The day that Canadians were expecting something, a coherent policy and plan, we were told to wait, that it was coming. It sounds like the foreign policy review to me; it is coming, do not worry, it will be there. We cannot wait any longer.

In terms of international standards, the OECD ranked us 24th out of 24, and 144th out of 146 in terms of exporting our pollution around the world. I would suggest that one actually has to make an effort to end up at 144th out of a list of 146 in terms of environmental standards and exporting one's pollution overseas.

While I have great respect for the hon. member as well, when he speaks to plans and the effectiveness of plans, simply stating how much money went out the door does not a plan make.

Hon. R. John Efford (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague, the Minister of the Environment.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to address the House on the important issue of climate change.

The world knows that climate change is real. We can already see the evidence: hotter, drier weather in some areas, less ice in the Arctic, and rising sea levels. The science is clear. Canada takes its responsibility to be part of a global solution very seriously. From the major investments we have already made to the leadership role we will take in the future, Canada's efforts to address climate change will be second to none in the world.

As Minister of Natural Resources I am keenly aware that at its heart climate change is largely about how we use energy. In Canada about 85% of carbon dioxide emissions, the leading greenhouse gas, come from producing, transforming and consuming energy. Canada has a dynamic energy framework focused on the continuing prosperity of Canadians, assuring Canadians access to a reliable and competitively priced supply of energy, and ensuring the production and use of energy is consistent with our environmental objectives.

Within this framework Canada has prospered and is positioned to continue to do so. Energy represented 5.6% of our gross domestic product in 2003. It accounts for nearly \$50 billion worth of exports and a fifth of all business investments. Canada is the world's biggest producer of hydroelectricity and uranium. We are third in gas production and also are a major producer of coal. Our oil reserves are second only to Saudi Arabia.

We must recognize that Canada's energy context is changing rapidly, beginning with opportunities and challenges, particularly on the environmental front. The 21st century will be the century of sustainable development, development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

It is the responsibility of the government to blaze the sustainable development trail for Canada. That means balancing our economic activities and our environmental goals. We must ensure our continued economic and social prosperity through the development of our natural resources while protecting our environment.

Supply

Sustainable development is a challenge, but it is a challenge that brings opportunities for Canadians. It allows us to benefit from resource development and fuel innovation. It ensures that future generations will be able to enjoy a high quality of life.

Climate change is the ultimate sustainable development issue and fundamentally an energy issue.

Between the Kyoto baseline year of 1990 and 2002, total energy production in Canada grew 43%. It is projected to achieve a cumulative growth of about 42% over the next 15 years.

The fundamental issue is how to break the link between energy and emissions. This will require technological change, but until these technological goals have been accomplished, we need to keep our feet to the fire. We need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from energy production and use, while at the same time ensuring an abundant supply of competitively priced energy for the prosperity of our children and grandchildren. This is not an easy challenge.

Canada has a relatively high energy intensive economy due to a combination of factors that make it unique among industrialized countries: a cold climate, distance between population centres, and Canada's resource based economy. As well, Canada's economy and population have been growing. Between 1990 and 2002 our gross domestic product grew by 40% and our population grew by 20%.

The main thrust of the action we have taken to date has been through measures aimed at reducing emissions during the Kyoto commitment period of 2008 and 2012. We have committed to invest close to \$3.7 billion in that effort and have implemented programs all across the Canadian economy.

We are experiencing tremendous success with a number of programs. For instance, we are working toward significantly increasing energy efficient housing. The EnerGuide for houses program has been a great success. It is the same story with our programs aimed at improving the efficiency of commercial and institutional buildings.

● (1055)

We are building on success. The Canadian industry program for energy conservation was launched 30 years ago, and Canadian industry is now saving some \$3 billion a year, thanks to the energy management practices that are part of CIPEC's efforts.

Emissions from houses, buildings and manufacturing have been essentially flat since 1990 despite robust economic and population growth. This is a significant accomplishment with important ramifications.

Taking the country as a whole, energy efficiency has improved by 13% since 1990. This has resulted in energy costs in 2004 that were \$12 billion lower than they would have been if these energy efficiency improvements had not taken place.

Supply

Energy consumption has slowed while the economy has grown during the past decade. Canada's economy grew by 40%. Energy demand grew by 18%. This is a significant gain in energy efficiency between 1990 and 2002.

We are a world leader in improving energy efficiency. A recent study by the International Energy Agency ranked Canada in the top third among IEA member countries in improving energy efficiency, ahead of the United States, the United Kingdom and Japan.

Much of this improvement is due to deliberate policy decisions and program resources furnished by the Government of Canada. We have made great improvements to be sure, but we cannot stop now. We have momentum on our side and we have progress in our future. More can be done, more needs to be done and more will be done.

Fundamentally, improving energy efficiency helps reduce GHG emissions. It also reduces, or at least moderates, the demand for energy. Improved energy efficiency cuts operating costs and increases industrial competitiveness.

The Government of Canada is equally committed to reducing emissions in the transportation sector. We are building on a record of success and more progress is being made.

We are working with our auto manufacturers to ensure this sector does its part to reduce emissions by making available to Canadians vehicles that are more fuel efficient and produce fewer greenhouse gas emissions.

We are also making good progress on renewable fuels. The ethanol expansion program, with \$100 million in funding, has already allocated contributions to six projects that together will almost quadruple the Canadian ethanol fuel supply by 2006. We have an aggressive target to see ethanol blended in 35% of the Canadian gasoline supply by 2010. Through initiatives like the ethanol expansion program and the continuing federal excise tax exemption on alternative fuels, we are getting closer to realizing that target.

Canada's position in oil and gas production is unique. We are one of the few industrialized countries that is a net exporter of energy. More than half of the energy we produce is exported. While those exports are an essential part of our economy, they also cause us to incur the emissions associated with energy we produce but do not use ourselves.

Most of our competitors in the oil and gas industry are not signatories to the Kyoto agreement and we are constrained in this sense.

In this context, carbon dioxide capture and storage is an important technology for us. It will allow us to continue to benefit from our energy resources while minimizing the impact on the environment.

In January I announced support to four projects under the first round of funding of the CO₂ capture and storage incentive program. These projects will demonstrate the feasibility of this important technology. Along with this announcement, I issued a call to fund a second round of proposals under the program. The application deadline to submit proposals is February 22.

On clean electricity, Canada is already a world leader. Within the OECD we are second only to the United States in total electricity production from renewable sources, mostly because of our vast hydroelectric and forestry resources.

We are also making notable progress in emerging renewable energy. For example, our wind power production incentive has started a wind power revolution in Canada with projects completed, under way or under consideration in every single province.

The government has already announced its intention to respond to the success of this program by quadrupling its size to encourage a total capacity of some 4,000 megawatts of wind power.

• (1100)

However the Government of Canada cannot address the challenges of climate change alone. That is why we are working closely with industry to establish a regulatory system to reduce industrial emissions and partnering with provinces and territories on innovative measures to reduce emissions.

We signed a number of MOUs with provinces and territories identifying prospective areas for future collaboration. Very shortly, we will be announcing the first round of funding toward a number of initiatives under the opportunities envelope, a \$160 million partnering mechanism designed to fund the most cost effective emission reduction ideas put forward by provinces and territories.

These efforts are about much more than short term results. Addressing climate change will transform our energy economy to bring about a real long term solution for our environment and our economy.

New technologies will only reduce emissions where they are taken up—

• (1105)

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): Questions and comments. The member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is somewhat paradoxical today to have the Minister of Natural Resources rise to speak on energy efficiency and his colleague, the Minister of the Environment, in the House applauding the speech. We know that the latter is proposing stricter energy standards, comparable to California's. We would, perhaps, like to see stricter regulations here in Canada .

My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Did the trip—the mission—by the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Transport to California a few weeks ago inspire them to provide Canada with stricter regulations to make vehicles more fuel efficient, with the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 25%?

Can the Minister of Natural Resources, as his colleague the environment minister proposes, put a new law in place to make vehicles more fuel efficient, in order to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 25%.

[English]

Hon. R. John Efford: Madam Speaker, everything the Minister of the Environment does inspires me. He is very committed to the environmental challenges. We work together very well on every issue, because while we have to grow the economy, we have to balance out and make sure that the environment is under strict protection. The Minister of the Environment is very conscious of his environmental concerns, as I am, as well as growing the economy of Canada.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, that was done excellently well with a straight face.

The government talks about blazing the trail. I am curious as to why I did not hear support for the motion in the hon. member's speech.

We have heard the rumours that various ministers are involved with negotiations in the auto sector seeking to have an actual number put in place. When can we expect those regulations to be brought in and, if they are not brought in, what will the consequences be? Will they be brought in this week, next week or will Canadians have to wait while the government continues to dither?

Hon. R. John Efford: Madam Speaker, I should give my hon. colleague some advice. When I was on the opposition side from 1985 to 1989, I never asked a question or made a comment in the House in those days when I did not know the answer.

The hon. member should do some research, and the number is 5.2 megatons.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Madam Speaker, I found the comment of the Minister of Natural Resources that he is inspired by the work of the Minister of the Environment very interesting. We have a 20% increase in greenhouse emissions when the plan calls for a 20% decrease. If that is inspiring, then obviously he is inspired by failure.

He also talked about momentum. We actually have an increase in emissions. In Ontario, 20% of hospital admissions for bronchitis in children under the age of one can be attributed to smog.

In terms of the energy efficient homes that he talked about, fewer than 10,000 homes have been constructed. That is less than 0.6% of new housing starts in Canada.

There is no momentum, unless we are talking about momentum backward, going down the slope.

I would like the minister to comment specifically on this failure of any sort of real presence in energy efficiency of homes, the failure to deal with smog and the failure to deal with greenhouse gases.

Hon. R. John Efford: Madam Chair, I fail to understand why the critics of the Kyoto protocol do not do some factual research. Canadians are inspired and they are taking up the challenge to carry out each of their responsibilities. The old billing efficiency program is going very well.

Supply

What the hon. member should keep in mind is that while Canada has made major improvements in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the economy has grown by 40%. Therefore we have to look at the balance.

Is he suggesting that we should shut down every single industry in this country? Members from western Canada would have something to say about that, as well as people from all over Canada. Canada is doing a great deal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but we all realize, as the Minister of the Environment will say, there is more to do.

• (1110)

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like some clarification from the government on its actual position on this motion and on mandatory standards.

I thought the parliamentary secretary to the minister indicated that the government would be supporting this motion to legislate mandatory improvements of vehicle efficiency, but perhaps that is not the case.

However would the government clearly state whether it supports voluntary or mandatory fuel efficiency measures for vehicles manufactured in Canada?

Hon. R. John Efford: Madam Speaker, the member misunderstood what my colleague said. He did not say what the member just stated. We very clearly support the voluntary approach. Negotiations are going on with the industry and we will wait to see at the end of the day how this will work out.

Let us look at what is happening in the United States. I think that is where there is a bit of confusion. We are very happy with what is going on in Canada today. We should be talking more about what we have actually accomplished with the Kyoto protocol, the amount of emissions that is actually being reduced from the atmosphere compared with the growing economy.

For anyone to say that nothing is happening in Canada is absolutely wrong. Canada is leading in the world in what we have already accomplished, but we certainly will need to do more and we will continue to do more.

[Translation]

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to tell the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley why the Government of Canada obviously cannot support this motion as an adjunct to the excellent speech by the hon. Minister of Natural Resources.

The first reason is that we are somewhat surprised the opposition did not present a motion congratulating not only the Government of Canada, but also the entire country of Canada, on hosting the most important international conference in the field of climate change, that is the 11th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, which will also be the first Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto protocol.

Supply

I think the hon. member should have asked his leader, who was with me in Buenos Aires, as was the Conservative critic, why Canada was approached to take on this conference. Perhaps then he would have learned that, as the Minister of Natural Resources said, the world is impressed by the fact that the Canadian economy, while growing strongly, has been able to begin to break the link between economic growth and greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, while greenhouse gas emissions have increased by 20% since 1990, the economy has grown by 40%. That is the first stage.

The second stage will be to reduce—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): Order, please. The hon. Minister of the Environment has the floor.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Stéphane Dion: The second step, Madam Speaker, will be to ensure that emissions decline. That is why we have a plan with more teeth, which will be more effective and which the opposition will be able to comment upon in a very polite, respectful way, I am sure.

The second reason we cannot support this motion is that it interferes in current negotiations through which we hope very much to reach an agreement with the automobile industry so that it will do its share in the Kyoto plan. The worst thing we could do would be to have parallel negotiations here in this House. I think, therefore, that it is wrong to start immediately trying to interfere in negotiations that are underway and that, we hope, will result in an agreement with the automobile industry, rather than our having to regulate.

We know that agreements can work when they are voluntary. Voluntary agreements have worked with this industry in the past. I would also remind the House that Europe reached a voluntary agreement with its automobile industry, which works fairly well. There is therefore no reason to dispose of a voluntary agreement at the outset. Negotiations are going on. Soon we will have the results. Let us hope that we will not have to regulate.

Now smog is certainly a major topic. Had the motion been on it, of course the Government of Canada would have been happy to work with the opposition. However, a certain knowledge of the progress that has been made regarding air quality is still important.

• (1115)

[*English*]

With regard to cuts to the sulphur content in gasoline, as of January 1, 2005 the federal government has reduced the sulphur content in gasoline by 90% from 2002. It is quite a result. This is one of the most strongest sulphur in gasoline regulations in the world.

We have fast-tracked on road vehicles and engine emission regulations for 2004 and later model years. While these regulations were being developed in 2001, the federal government signed an MOU with the auto industry providing for the production of low emission vehicles. On average these regulations, together with the MOU with the industry, will reduce the allowance emissions level from new on road vehicles by close to 90% from the standards that applied in 2003.

We have cut the sulphur content on road diesel fuel reducing the allowable limit of sulphur from the current regulated limit of 500 parts per million by 97% to 15 parts per million in 2006. These regulations will enable the introduction of advanced emission control system diesel vehicles, trucks and buses.

I have a long list of incredible accomplishments that have been done in Canada and we must congratulate our country for that.

The new emissions standards regulations passed for small engines such as those found in lawn and garden machines will reduce smog forming emissions from these engines by more than 50% from current levels starting this year.

Regulations for off road diesel engines such as those that power construction, agriculture and forestry machines, will come into effect January 1, 2006. Canadian emissions standards for off road compression ignition engines align with the U.S. standards currently in place.

Emissions regulations covering recreational marine engines such as outboards, personal watercraft and recreational vehicles which includes snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles and off road motorcycles are currently being prepared. Formal publication of these off road regulations is expected this year, and I could go on.

[*Translation*]

Much remains to be done, of course. We are going to strengthen our air quality policy, but what has been done cannot be denied. We must tell Canadians that we are all in this together, and it is no good to have a negative opposition, which wants to paint everything as black as possible.

The Conservative opposition, which is against the Kyoto protocol—it must be said—fails to understand that, in reducing greenhouse gases, we end up with positive effects too.

[*English*]

We need to decrease smog, mercury and other non-greenhouse gases. The plan that we will release soon will be an improved plan if we compare it with 2002. It will be an opportunity to decrease greenhouse gas emissions in Canada and at the same time address these issues that are so important for air quality in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Canada is going to host the most important conference on climate change in Montreal at the end of the year, because the world is counting on Canada. The opposition does not understand that, but it is the truth.

In fact, of all the countries that signed the Kyoto Protocol, none has such a demanding target or is going to have such an impressive plan as ours for reaching this demanding target. Canada is very well placed to be the link between the United States, Europe, the countries with emerging economies and the developing countries.

The world is counting on Canada. I hope that the official opposition will work with Canada instead of confining itself, as is now the case, to strictly negative remarks.

• (1120)

[English]

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Madam Speaker, one area where our party does agree with the NDP and the Bloc is that the government has no plan whatsoever, has never had a plan, and has absolutely no intention of tabling a plan, which is quite clear to all of us.

However, the other problem is that the government is so focused on greenhouse gases that it is ignoring all the other environmental problems. It is ignoring problems like smog. I want to ask the minister a very simple question to see his awareness of this issue. He talked about reducing sulphur in gasoline. Is he aware that to reduce sulphur in gasoline, it actually has to be refined more which actually increases the CO₂ levels? It shows that we have to address environmental problems in a holistic sense, address the whole environmental issue, rather than just focusing on one like CO₂ which is what the government is doing but not even doing well because it is not tabling a plan.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Madam Speaker, there is a plan; it is the 2002 plan which was tabled in 2002. It seems that the hon. member is not even aware of that. Perhaps he was not there, but this is the case.

If we are negotiating with the automotive industry today in order to have a voluntary agreement to improve fuel efficiency and to ensure that the automotive industry will do its share for the Kyoto plan, it is because there is a plan. It is supposed to deliver 5.2 megatonnes.

This has not been recently invented. This is a policy since 2002. We are concluding these negotiations. This will not nullify the other regulations that the industry will have to cope with. We are going together. The Government of Canada has a compelling policy for the quality of our air.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Minister of the Environment for at least clearing up one mystery. We now know why we do not have a plan. It is because the government thinks that everything is voluntary. Canadians only have to look at the government ads to know that it is about participating and being voluntary.

There is some confusion here. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources left the distinct impression that there was support for the motion today. In fact, the other parties here actually understood that from his comments. We will get the blues to actually examine that. He did leave that distinct impression.

Then we have the Minister of the Environment saying that we do not support mandatory requirements for emissions and that we are into the voluntary thing. The real question here is, why after 15 years are we still at a point where we do not have any emissions standards? We are still working on voluntary standards that have not been put into place. The voluntary standards clearly are a failure and we still have no plan.

The minister said the plan will be released pretty soon. That is what he said a few minutes ago. I would love to know and Canadians would love to know, what does he mean by pretty soon? Five

Supply

minutes after that he said that we do have a plan. What is it; voluntary or not, mandatory or not, a plan or not?

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Madam Speaker, the hon. member knows the answer to her question. She is intelligent enough to know that we have said again and again that we have had a plan since 2002.

The Minister of Natural Resources showed that we have made progress with this plan. This is why the increase in emissions is not at the same speed as the increase in the economy. This is because under our government the economy is going very well and it is growing. The hon. member understands that, I am sure. She pretends she does not understand because she does not have a critique to give. She will only repeat the same critique.

She knows that the plan needs to be improved. The improvement of the plan will be out pretty soon. She knows all that. She pretends that she does not understand because she does not have a critique to promulgate.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Madam Speaker, the minister has some nerve telling us today that the government's voluntary approach is working. Only two agreements have been signed, yet the government set itself the deadline of December 2004 for all the industrial sector agreements. So it has failed miserably.

The minister has, moreover, just come back from California. He saw what is being done there. Can he make a commitment today in this House to table regulations to bring Canadian automotive manufacturing standards in line, not with U.S. federal government standards, but with California's?

• (1125)

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Madam Speaker, that is two questions.

First of all, the automotive industry must not be confused with the major final emitters. The auto industry is not one of them, because the emissions are not produced by the auto industry in the manufacture of automobiles, but by the consumer products, the cars and trucks. This is why we are trying to conclude a voluntary agreement with the auto industry.

Moving to the second element of the question, California tried the voluntary route and moved on to the regulatory when no voluntary agreement was forthcoming. This is exactly the same approach as Canada is taking. We are quite confident that we will not have to resort to regulations because we will have concluded a voluntary agreement, as has Europe. It may well work.

In the past, we have sometimes used the regulatory approach and sometimes the voluntary. We know both can work. The advantage of the voluntary approach is that it is far less complicated to administer. Very often, voluntary agreements concluded with the auto industry have yielded excellent results. That is what we are working on at the moment. I would ask the opposition not to interfere in these negotiations because, if they are successful, it will be good news for all Canadians.

Supply

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Conservative Party believes in cleaning up the environment. We believe in clean air and clean water, and we believe that this should be a priority for government. We also believe that we can do this without decimating our key industries and without implementing unrealistic legislation, placing our key industries at an economic disadvantage internationally. Therefore, I rise today in opposition of this NDP motion.

As the representative for Oshawa, I cannot believe that the opposition party would put forth such an irresponsible, short-sighted proposition. If this motion were to pass, it would have a devastating effect on Canada's auto industry. Canada's Kyoto protocol-defined reduction is very aggressive and not possible to achieve.

Oshawa is famous for producing the best quality automobiles in North America. A big part of the reason we produce such excellent quality vehicles is due to the quality people who put together these cars. Oshawa's auto workers are dedicated professionals whose eye for detail has contributed to a prosperous auto industry in Canada. Today I rise in defence of auto worker jobs and union jobs. The truth is that numerous auto jobs in my constituency will be put in jeopardy if this motion passes requiring mandatory improvements to vehicle efficiency.

The NDP has put forth a motion that does not address the realities of the auto industry and the economic implications of the proposed legislation. This motion proves that the protection and the retention of auto jobs in Canada and the global competitiveness of the auto industry are clearly not a priority of the NDP.

In Canada we build mid to large size vehicles, minivans, cars and trucks. If this motion goes through, it will mean that virtually every car, truck and minivan built in Canada could not be sold here. As chair of the Conservative auto caucus, I had the opportunity to visit each of Canada's five vehicle manufacturers. They were unanimous in what they told me. They told me that legislating a mandatory reduction in fuel consumption of 25% by 2010 would have a devastating effect on the auto industry. As one auto exec bluntly told me, "If we cannot sell the cars here, why would we build them here?"

What the NDP is trying to do is akin to legislating the garment industry into making size two dresses only and demanding that everyone fit into them. That should fix the problem.

If the NDP motion is put through it would greatly restrict Canadian consumer choice. It would mean that Canadians could only drive subcompact cars, such as the Chevy Aveo and the Toyota Echo. What would my constituents who are in the trades drive? I actually have a friend who is 6'3". His wife is 6'1". He has two rather tall kids. On the weekend he drives to the cottage with his family, his gear, the dog and sometimes grandma. Which car does my NDP colleague want him to drive, the Aveo or the Echo?

Madam Speaker, I want to let you know that I am splitting my time with my colleague from Edmonton—Leduc.

It is essential that we improve emissions standards, but that we do so in a manner that strengthens not weakens the auto industry. The NDP motion calls for legislation that will undermine the economic

and competitive position of the Canadian auto industry. As the representative for Oshawa, I refuse to let auto workers in my constituency be unduly affected by legislation that disproportionately penalizes the auto sector. Look at the time and resources it has taken to elicit a voluntary commitment from one industry to deliver less than 1.8% of the national greenhouse gas reduction obligations that Canada accepted in ratifying the Kyoto protocol.

The fact is that mandatory improvements for the auto industry under Kyoto are unrealistic. The plan calls for a reduction in emissions by 5.2 million tonnes by 2010. A 25% fuel reduction approach is touted as a means to achieve that goal. The lead time for design change in automotive manufacturing is roughly four years. Product plans are already underway for vehicles that will be manufactured by the end of 2010. Product development takes time: time to plan, engineer, design and manufacture. Efficiency improvements are typically implemented as new vehicle programs are initiated and are not suited to mid-product cycle.

● (1130)

The NDP is looking to legislate mandatory improvements when it clearly does not understand the challenges the automotive industry faces today, such as unfair competition from offshore manufacturers and challenges identified in the CAPC report.

Mandatory improvements are unlikely to take into account important variables like differences among the many vehicles various companies produce. Regulation and legislation insensitive to the industry could lead to disproportionate effects on the sector, with devastating effects on workers, plants and dealerships.

The reality is that the Canadian auto industry represents 9% of an integrated North American market. If the NDP members had bothered to check, they would have realized that the United States, Canada's largest trading partner, has not signed on to the Kyoto accord. Canada deals with a 90% auto export rate to the U.S. Attempts to make substantial engineering changes solely for the Canadian market would result in excessive costs, restricted consumer choice and a competitive disadvantage.

It is also a reality that the NDP motion calls for mandatory emission standards when there is no agreed upon cost analysis for the new technology. Independent research by Sierra Research Associates estimates costs based on North America wide application of technologies at as much as \$2,600 for cars and over \$4,600 for trucks and says that the lead time for compliance with a 25% requirement by the end of 2010 is not sufficient. If the 25% is required on a Canada only basis, the cost would be much higher.

The auto industry has committed to drive greenhouse gas reductions through new technologies, publicly partner with the government in the fight for climate change and support automotive R and D in Canada.

In order to reach those goals, the auto industry is prepared to partner with the government to continue to aggressively pursue the introduction of cost effective, energy efficient technologies and alternate fuel offerings that use lower carbon fuels, and it is committed to a joint government-industry committee to measure progress toward its 5.2 million tonne goal. The industry also has agreed to a joint reporting committee with the government to monitor annual progress.

The industry's voluntary integrated agreement addresses the reality of the continental industry. It combines new vehicle technologies that save fuel with the broader availability of alternative fuels such as ethanol and biodiesels and provides communication support to help consumers adapt driving behaviours and enable them to afford more efficient vehicles in Canada.

The NDP has argued that we should adopt California standards. If the NDP would bother to step outside today and get some fresh air instead of the hot air they are promoting today, they might realize we are not like California.

First, Canada is colder than California. Driving in colder climates consumes more gasoline.

Second, California does not have an industry to speak of. It has one plant. It has little to risk. Canada has a dozen plants and much to risk by adopting unrealistic legislation.

Third, according to the CAW, Canada employs over 150,000 people directly in auto assembly and parts, with a spinoff of seven jobs for every one; this means that for every assembly job seven other jobs are created. Over 500,000 Canadians owe their jobs directly to the auto industry. Is it sensible to risk these jobs for little actual improvement to global greenhouse gas reduction?

Finally, CAW findings show that the Canadian auto industry generated a positive trade balance for Canada of \$20 billion in 2001. This trade balance is fragile and depends on the free flow of goods across the Canada-U.S. border.

The NDP has not presented any economic impact studies indicating the cost to industry and costs in jobs in making such drastic legislation.

Canada alone is responsible for only 2% of global greenhouse gases. It is irresponsible to bet our entire auto industry in order to fulfill an ideological mandate. To legislate mandatory emissions standards at this time would be careless.

Supply

The Conservative Party is committed to cleaning up the environment while acknowledging the realities of the auto industry and what is attainable within it.

The industry itself is also deeply committed to producing cleaner cars. In fact, the industry has already reduced smog emissions by 99.6% since 1970 through sophisticated emission control technology.

My colleague needs to come clean and admit that not only is this motion irresponsible at this time, but it puts the well-being of the Canadian auto industry and its workers dead last on the list of national priorities for the NDP.

• (1135)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is a bit odd to see the Conservative Party discuss this motion today. Everyone knows that the federal government, in taking a voluntary approach with the automobile industry, among others, is simply protecting Ontario's economic base.

The government reached voluntary agreements with the major industries. I am talking about the oil industry, whose greenhouse gas emissions have increased by 47% since 1990. The government excludes the automobile industry from the list of major industrial emitters. It is this type of policy that will strengthen the economic base of western Canada while excluding the automobile industry is just a way of protecting Ontario's base.

Does the hon. member not agree that what we have here is not an environment minister, but an economy minister, who answers to various industry lobbies?

Mr. Colin Carrie: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member from the Bloc Québécois for his question.

We have a problem with pollution and global warming. If this motion is passed, it will not be a solution. It will have a negative impact not only on Oshawa, but on the entire country.

[*English*]

We in the Conservative Party want to use common sense in reaching our greenhouse gas targets. What the NDP is promoting is something that would be reckless and irresponsible. It is the same with the government. It is not releasing any cost or impact studies of the effects this would have on the industry. As the member for Oshawa I feel it is reckless to bet the entire industry on legislation that is unproven in regard to what the results would be.

Regarding the comments by the member from Quebec, GM and Hyundai used to build cars there, and we had better believe that if they still built cars there he would be fighting for this issue too.

Supply

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the opposition has asked me where I stand on this. Obviously I do not agree with the motion and I will not be supporting it, but what I said was that I am delighted it is on the floor, for two reasons.

First, the Government of Canada is already working to reduce auto emissions in a number of ways. The second reason is that it gives us a chance today to outline, which has already been done by the two ministers, with great content, the various items that Canada is working on to reduce greenhouse gases looking toward the Kyoto plan. I think that is why this is a very illuminating debate. We are winning this debate for that reason.

I would like to ask a question of the two critics from the Bloc and the Conservatives, because the NDP could not answer this. There are a lot of provisions in place to reduce emissions. Perhaps the members can outline what some of them are.

• (1140)

Mr. Colin Carrie: Madam Speaker, right now there are voluntary things put in place by the auto industry. As a matter of fact, the auto industry has been quite successful in decreasing emissions. For example, since 1990 Honda has decreased its emissions by 35%. What we have going on with the voluntary emissions decrease is working the way it is supposed to.

What I would like to talk about for a couple of minutes, though, is the economic impact and the devastating effect the motion would have if it were to pass. Auto workers in Canada pay over \$2 billion in taxes. The GST and PST collected from automobiles total over \$7 billion. To put such legislation into effect would be devastating to the economy and devastating to my community. We cannot support this reckless legislation.

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to take part in this very lively debate. It is good for the House to be debating this issue.

At the outset, I want to read the motion from the NDP into the record:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should recognize the public health impacts of smog and the failure of voluntary emission standards by legislating mandatory improvements to vehicle efficiency in all classes of light duty vehicles sold in Canada.

As my colleague just said, we certainly recognize that smog is a problem, a huge problem, particularly in our larger centres. We need to recognize that sulphur dioxide and nitrous oxide are the main contributors to this.

Our party supports, and in fact our environment critic, the member for Red Deer, has called for, a clean air act and environmental legislation that would address this. We put this forward before the last election, calling for the government to take action on NO₂ and SO₂ in particular. In fact, we should not stop with clean air; we should address clean water and obviously some of the land issues as well.

Before I get to the specifics of the motion, I want to address the issue of Kyoto because we have just heard from the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Natural Resources. Members of the Bloc, of the NDP and certainly of my party have pointed out that the

government in fact has no plan. It was basically admitted by the Minister of the Environment as recently as this week in an article in *The Globe and Mail*. The article stated:

The federal government admitted yesterday it has no plan in place to meet its commitments under the Kyoto Protocol....Ottawa had promised to have a comprehensive implementation plan ready no later than next week's budget, complete with the regulatory or tax measures needed to meet the Kyoto targets for greenhouse gas emissions.

But [the] environment [minister] said yesterday it will be "several more weeks" before anything is ready. Cabinet ministers have made no firm decisions, he said.

That is completely unacceptable. The government signed on to Kyoto in 1997 and ratified it in 2002 and still has no plan.

The government references a plan from 2002. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and the member from Windsor know full well, because they sat on a committee that studied the implementation plan at that point, that even members of the government would have to admit the plan was lacking in detail. The then minister of the environment was before us as we were asking about things like whether there would be tax credits for vehicles to allow people to buy hybrid vehicles. The response was that the government did not know if it was going to do that.

There was a mention in the plan of a CO₂ sequestration and pipeline. What is the government planning to do with this? This could actually reduce CO₂ emissions substantially. The minister at the time said he did not know what was being done with that and that the government would have to see where that goes.

We will have to see where that goes? These are the sorts of answers that the committee received, which basically revealed that the government has absolutely no idea what it is doing on Kyoto, and it has caused some serious problems. It is a matter of international standing when one signs on to an agreement with absolutely no idea of how those commitments are going to be fulfilled.

The government should be honest with Canadians and start to address environmental problems as a whole issue, as I was mentioning about the gasoline industry. The gasoline industry has reduced sulphur, and we certainly support that, but in doing so it increased some of the CO₂ emissions. We need to look at addressing environmental issues overall, especially the more noxious toxins like NO₂ and SO₂.

I want to address some specifics of the motion. My colleague from British Columbia raised this earlier. I think NDP members should perhaps in their future speeches talk specifically about what they are calling for in the motion with regard to greenhouse gases, NO₂ and SO₂, with some plans, some specific mandatory measures to be put in place. As members of the House know, there already are a lot of mandatory measures on that industry. In fact, the industry would argue, and I think this party would agree, that there are too many regulations on this industry. There are too many regulations that are different from the North American regulatory market.

Supply

Why are we only addressing this industry? Why the focus on this industry, particularly in regard to the members from Windsor? We should look at why we are only addressing and targeting the auto industry, particularly when the two members from Windsor have an awful lot of auto workers in their ridings who rely on this industry. Why are they targeting it and singling it out for what is in my view unfair attention? Why only vehicles sold in Canada? This is something that I think the members should look at closely: "legislating mandatory improvements to vehicle efficiency in all classes of light duty vehicles sold in Canada".

• (1145)

Members should know that 80% to 90% of the vehicles manufactured in Canada are exported primarily to the United States. Is the NDP arguing that we should have two assembly lines, one with regulatory emission standards for the 10% to 20% of vehicles sold in Canada and the other with different standards for the 80% to 90% of vehicles that are exported? Perhaps members opposite could clear that up with respect to the motion.

In our view there is a need for regulatory harmonization with this industry. I would like to quote a spokesperson for the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers' Association who said it very well in 2002 when he addressed the fuel efficiency target of 25%. Mark Nantais, president of the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers' Association, said:

The government's choice of a 25% target, without due diligence for what is achievable in the stipulated timeframe, given the other very important considerations of consumer safety, technological feasibility, and economic impact, is a major concern. It creates, quite frankly, unrealistic public expectations for both government and our industry. If we put it another way, we're being set up for failure.

That was said back in 2002 when members of the industry and others were raising this issue and saying that it was an unachievable target and that it would harm the industry. The government, unfortunately, did not listen to their concerns and did not recognize what the industry had already done.

The member for Oshawa, the chair of our auto caucus, pointed out very well what the industry has already done in a proactive way to address its emissions. Emissions coming out of its assembly plants between 1990-99 and the energy intensity of its plant operations were reduced by nearly 18%. We should recognize that and celebrate the fact that the industry has taken action by and of itself.

We need to understand that the automobile industry in Canada is within the context of a North American industry. However, the NDP, with its motion today, seems to have no clue that we are within a North American market and that we do export most of our vehicles to the United States. It would be nonsense for us to create further regulatory disharmony between our regulations and the regulations in the United States. It would harm the industry and the workers in Windsor, Oshawa, Cambridge, Alliston and elsewhere. What the NDP does not understand and will never understand is that to create regulatory burdens on the industry drives people out of work.

Let me address some solutions. We in the Conservative Party do support a clean air act. We would deal with nitrous oxide and sulphur oxide. Our environment critic will be here this afternoon and he can present it to members then.

We support infrastructure spending. We have called for the government to share the federal fuel tax with communities across

Canada to address the issue of congestion. One only has to go to areas like Windsor, Toronto and Edmonton to see the congestion caused by a lack of available infrastructure.

There are three approaches to the environment that the government could take. First, it could impose further regulation on the industry, but we believe that would harm the industry and not lead to overall economic growth or environmental stewardship.

The second approach would be through program spending. Some program spending may be necessary. The government will be outlaying \$3.7 billion. Members of the environment committee are studying this issue. I know the member for Essex is also involved in this. However the government has not been very forthright about where the money is going.

The third approach could be through incentives. I am speaking about incentives to encourage the industry itself to innovate and change consumer habits. The Conservative Party believes the government should head in that direction. We think providing tax credits for buying hybrid vehicles would be a sensible thing. It is something the government should do and we hope the government will do so in the budget. It should encourage people to change their habits and reduce some of the emissions.

Another thing that could be done by the government, which I referenced earlier, is that instead of putting \$3.7 billion into these various funds and having the people go to it, the government should work with the industry, particularly those in western Canada, and look at a CO₂ sequestration and a CO₂ pipeline.

• (1150)

If we were to combine that with a clean air act that addresses NO₂ and SO₂, we would address the CO₂ by sequestering it and using it to filter out more of the oil from the ground. This would actually address CO₂ emissions in a very substantive way and it is something we hope the government looks at as a solution to environmental challenges, rather than just focussing on Kyoto, and in fact not focussing very well by not in any way tabling a reasonable plan.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I always appreciate listening to my colleague's observations. I think we both agree that the timing of the motion is curious. Why was it brought in today given the fact that there are ongoing negotiations with the auto industry? The issue is one of voluntary or mandatory regulations.

Clearly, if one were negotiating one would assume that one would not want to bring in a motion like this, to bring a hammer down when there are presumably discussions being held in good faith. However that is up to them.

The member across said that we did not have a plan. I would be more than happy to take him outside later and give him a copy of the climate change plan for action that was developed in 2002. The government has admitted that any good plan often needs revision and we are prepared and are working on revisions. The minister has been very clear on that and it will be released very soon, along with the upcoming budget.

Supply

The fact that the Conservative Party has only recently discovered the environment is better late than never. That is the party, of course, that said that carbon dioxide, while linked to global warming, was not a threat to air quality. It also said that carbon dioxide did not cause or contribute to smog. Maybe the members of that party have had their heads in the clouds a little too long.

Since the member has critiqued, although not very well, what he thinks is not our plan, could he tell us what his party is proposing for dealing with the auto sector? How would his party deal with the emissions issue? Why does he believe that the approach his party presumably has, given the fact that we believe we can have a strong economy, a strong auto sector and a strong environment, are compatible?

Mr. James Rajotte: Madam Speaker, obviously the CO₂ pipeline sequestration is a huge issue that addresses CO₂ generally. In terms of the auto sector, I think incenting consumers to buy hybrid vehicles is a legitimate policy suggestion that we would look at quite favourably.

There is capital cost allowance. It is kind of abstract. People may ask how this would impact the environment. In fact, if we were to allow companies to write-off their machinery at a quicker pace and allow them to replace and upgrade their manufacturing process at a quicker pace, they would move to more environmentally sensitive machinery and assembly line processes. That is how the auto industry has reduced some of its emissions from the plants.

Another issue that the auto industry has raised is that Canadians drive their vehicles for longer periods of time in Canada because of the disposable income gap between Canadians and Americans. It was highlighted by Don Drummond in his recent report for the TD Bank. If the government were to reduce taxes on an overall level, it would give Canadians more disposable income which in turn would allow them to replace older vehicles with newer vehicles that are more fuel efficient and better for the environment.

Those are three policy options I would suggest the government should take a serious look at. I do have to tell my hon. colleague that when we were on the industry committee we studied the plan in 2002 and, frankly, it was not much of a plan at all, but even the good things that were in the plan, the government has done nothing whatsoever to implement them.

• (1155)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is almost insulting to hear the parliamentary secretary say that this House has no role to discuss one of the most important industries in Canadian history and also the future prosperity of this country.

The citizens of this country are sick and tired of waiting for backroom Liberal deals to try to address crises in this country. It is reprehensible that this chamber should not have a voice and an opportunity in a democracy to openly discuss this.

I have a question for the member opposite who sits with me on the industry committee. I understand, and I am sure everyone understands, his concern about the job factor. I come from an area that represents many auto workers. The CAW supports movement toward mandatory standards. I think it is an unfair criticism to our motion that we actually are calling for that movement and creating some

flexibility for negotiations as part of it. This is a motion, not legislation. The member for Oshawa does not seem to understand what is happening here. I would like the member to comment on that in terms of why can we not have flexibility to do that.

Point No. 4 in the CAPC report No. 4, Regulatory Harmonization, states:

Take action to coordinate and streamline regulations (including those pertaining to vehicle safety, certification and emissions) between Canada and the United States, and within Canada, in recognition of the integrated nature of the North American industry and the need to coordinate automotive-related investment marketing by Canadian jurisdictions

I would like to know if the member supports the CAPC recommendation.

Mr. James Rajotte: Madam Speaker, I very much agree with that CAPC recommendation.

However I would challenge the member to then survey the CAPC members on whether they agree with this motion. In my view the report that was done by CAPC and the statement that the member just read is not what the motion is calling for. The motion calls for further regulatory disharmony.

With respect to his statement that it is a motion and not legislation, the motion reads:

—the failure of voluntary emission standards by legislating mandatory improvements to vehicle efficiency in all classes of light duty vehicles sold in Canada.

With all due respect, I do not think that is a motion that allows flexibility. I think that is a motion that directs the government on specifically what to do with light duty vehicles in Canada. That is a very specific motion.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to the opposition motion of the New Democratic Party. I will take the time to read it first so that I can then comment on it more easily.

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should recognize the public health impacts of smog and the failure of voluntary emission standards by legislating mandatory improvements to vehicle efficiency in all classes of light duty vehicles sold in Canada

For starters, I should say that my party intends to support the opposition motion put forward today by the NDP. However, I do have some criticism of it. In our view, it must be said that this motion is vague and inadequate. Why is it vague? Because it fails unfortunately to specify the extent to which we expect the automobile industry to improve the efficiency of light duty vehicles. Is the standard 25% or 10%? No one knows.

Of course we must take a regulatory approach. That is what we think on this side of the House. However, we must never forget that our regulations must be consistent, not with the American government standards—as is currently the case in the Canadian Environmental Protection Act and the regulations under it—but rather with the practices and regulations recently adopted in California. It is important to remember that.

Smog has been a reality in Canada for a number of years now. However, Quebec was alerted to it more than ever recently during several days in early February when Montreal and the Outaouais were hit by a smog alert. This was quite unusual. How could Montrealers and the people of the Outaouais possibly expect a smog alert in February? This points to a major problem which reminds us that we must change our ways of doing things and our consumption patterns.

Before I go on to the automobile industry and its impact, we must remember, first and foremost, that it is not just vehicle exhaust that causes this smog. Wood stoves and wood heating are also responsible for smog. As recently as between 1987 and 2000, there was a 60% increase in wood heating in Canada compared to only a 20% increase in rental housing. This means that the number of people who decided to heat their homes with wood more than doubled in 15 years. Naturally, that has a major impact on air quality, especially in urban areas like Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, which I represent in this House.

There is a mandatory five-year review of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. At present, wood stove manufacturing standards have been harmonized with EPA standards. It may be time to consider, during our examination of the relevant sections of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, if stricter standards on wood stove manufacturing could not be implemented.

The crux of the problem is the transportation sector as a whole. We must remember that this sector is responsible for 25% of all greenhouse gas emissions in Canada.

• (1200)

So, this is not an inconsequential sector. Just before I started my intervention, I was looking at the figures, and the oil and gas sectors are responsible for 18% of these emissions. So, the transportation sector is the primary emitter of greenhouse gas in Canada, with 25%. It is even expected that by 2010, there will be a 32% increase in greenhouse emissions in the transportation sector compared to the 1990 levels, if nothing is done, and I want to emphasize that point.

This means that we have to make some choices. If Canada decides to maintain the status quo and not implement any measures, greenhouse emissions will have increased by 32% compared to 1990 levels. So we are forced to take action.

Until now, the government has chosen to take a voluntary approach with the auto industry, among others. Ultimately, this approach means that the auto industry is being trusted to improve vehicle fuel efficiency.

But that begs a fundamental question. Since there are quite a number of sectors in Canada—I am thinking of manufacturing, pulp and paper, steel—how come the federal government has decided to exclude the auto industry from the large industrial emitters?

When 25% of emissions are generated by the transportation sector—and there is a major correlation between greenhouse gas emissions and motor vehicle use—why was it decided to exclude the automotive sector from the large industrial emitters?

If the government, through its Minister of the Environment or Minister of Natural Resources, had announced to us today that the

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automotive industry was excluded from the large industrial emitters because the technology did not exist, I might almost understand. That is the case in certain industry sectors, such as cement manufacturing, for example. There we have substantial greenhouse gas emissions, and the technology to improve the energy balance of that industrial sector unfortunately does not exist. If that were the case for the automotive sector, I might almost understand.

But no. The technology to improve the energy efficiency of vehicles is available. So why are we not forcing the automobile industry to make better vehicles? When the technology exists, why do we continue to apply a voluntary approach which in recent years has produced no results? Some will say it is for economic reasons. I was listening to the hon. members from the Conservative Party telling us earlier that we had to understand that the vehicles produced in Canada were being exported.

It is as if to say that what has been done in California, which has a population of over 25 million and a market comparable to Canada's—so it has similar economic conditions—is good for California but not for Canada.

The economic argument does not wash, because the Canadian market is comparable to the California market. So what can be done in California can most certainly be done in Canada.

I look, among other things, at the action plan on climate change that was tabled in November 2002. The section on energy efficiency states that the automotive sector would be required to make an effort to reduce greenhouse gases by 5.2 megatonnes and improve automobile efficiency by 25%. The plan is that specific.

Unfortunately, the New Democratic Party motion does not contain this level of effort that we are demanding of the automobile industry. We would have liked to see that 25% threshold in this motion. What the automobile industry has been telling us lately is that it is not interested in any norm for improving vehicle efficiency by 25%.

• (1205)

That industry tells us that it is certainly prepared to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 5.2 megatonnes, but it does not want to have a standard comparable to California's. It prefers the status quo. The status quo, what we have at the moment, is a harmonization of the vehicle manufacturing standards with those of the federal government, the EPA.

There is a flagrant injustice being imposed on the various industrial sectors at this time. For example, the manufacturing sector—not the Quebec manufacturing sector, but the sector as a whole—has made a 7% reduction in its greenhouse gas emissions and the reduction imposed on it is 15%. How can anyone claim that what is being negotiated at this time is fair?

Supply

An industrial sector that has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 7% gets a 15% reduction imposed upon it, while an industrial sector like the auto industry, which has the technology, would not be included among the major emitters. There is something inequitable here; the government's proposed approach is unfair. A few months ago, the government announced a multi-million aid package for Ford. No problem, if they want to help that sector, and that particular company, that is fine with me. But, how can that company use the taxpayers' money without being prepared to apply more stringent energy efficiency standards? Ought this assistance to Ford not to have been conditional on improved manufacturing so as to produce more energy-efficient vehicles?

When the Commissioner of the Environment speaks of strategic environmental assessments, that is exactly what she is referring to. What does she say about this? That tax measures, financial assistance, is being provided to certain companies without due consideration of sustainable development and environmental protection.

Take Bill C-48. This is a bill that gives some \$250 million a year in tax incentives to the hydrocarbon industry. Fine. The industry gets tax incentives and financial assistance and what do we get in return from these sectors that do not even have to sign a voluntary agreement with the federal government to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 15%? What do these sectors have to say about this?

I was reading the steel industry agreement. It is worth a read. Two agreements were signed by the federal government: one with the pulp and paper industry and the other with the steel industry. If you take the time to read the agreement, you will see that it says that the industry will enforce a 15% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions provided the competitiveness of the industry is not affected. This is based on industry studies.

So, the industry is prepared to accept federal assistance—that is the case with Ford—but it is not prepared to enforce stricter standards to improve vehicle efficiency by 25%.

What should be our direction in the coming years? In my opinion there are two approaches. It takes a fiscal and budgetary approach together with a regulatory approach. Let us develop a regulatory approach to make—and this is the case in the automobile industry—existing technologies more energy efficient.

• (1210)

We are not talking about research and development in this economic sector. We are talking about technologies that already exist. The government has a responsibility when faced with an industry that refuses to make the manufacture of vehicles more efficient.

Let us implement regulations that harmonize with California's, a regulatory approach, as the New Democratic Party proposes, so that, at the end of the day, new vehicles that come on the market will be more energy efficient and thus will help reduce smog. That is not enough: this regulatory approach must be accompanied by a tax-based approach to assist the public choosing to use sustainable transportation.

Sustainable transportation is help for public transit. How can the government not have included the very simple measure of making the cost of a public transit pass tax-deductible in its budget?

On February 23, let us hope that the Minister of Finance, who has been described as green by the Minister of the Environment—I have faith in what the Minister of the Environment says about the Minister of Finance—but if he is serious, he will announce on February 23 that the cost of a public transit pass will be deductible. That is the first step.

As a second step, there must be a tax incentive for people who decide to use a hybrid vehicle. A few months ago I bought a hybrid vehicle, which cost me \$10,000 more than a conventional vehicle of the same make with the same options.

While the federal government is giving tax incentives to the oil industry, through Bill C-48, a responsible individual must spend an additional \$10,000 to buy a more ecological vehicle. That makes no sense.

In this budget there must be a tax incentive for the citizen making a decision. What is \$10,000 for a person who decides to live a cleaner life, when \$250 million per year is given, with one stroke, to the oil industry? There must at least be some balance in tax policy between the aid given to these polluting industries and the aid given to the environmental industry in Canada. That must be our approach.

Canada could decide to adopt this strategic environmental assessment. As we know, in 1994 there was a directive from Cabinet—not the members of the House of Commons—to the effect that all departments ought to apply strategic environmental assessments to measures they were deciding upon. Plans, policies and programs should all be subjected to that test.

Unfortunately, this is not the case. If the government decided to enact legislation here in this Parliament to force all departments—among them Transport Canada and Finance in particular—and the commissioner was not very kind toward the latter, indicating that it was dragging its feet—to apply strategic environmental assessment to departmental plans, policies and programs, we would likely not be where we are today. It would be very likely that Canada could be presenting the Montreal conference in September with a better record as far as energy and greenhouse gas emissions are concerned than the one we have at present.

I will again point out that my party will be supporting the NDP motion.

• (1215)

[*English*]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for the member opposite. He has been working on the environment file for some time. I would like to ask him about transit subsidies, but before doing so, I would like to put two points on the record.

As I said earlier, the great thing about this debate is we can get out on the table a lot of the things we are doing relating to Kyoto, which members in the House and people across the country apparently are not aware of. The loyal opposition member suggested in his speech that we were not doing anything on CO₂ sequestration and that we should.

I am happy to announce that on January 17 we provided \$10.8 million to Anadarko Canada, Apache Canada Limited, Penn West Petroleum and Suncor for CO₂ sequestration. Just so everyone knows, the next round of proposals for \$4.2 million is available and people can apply before April 2005.

The NDP complimented us earlier that the next budget would be the greenest in history. However, we already have the largest environment program in history by any government in Canada, including NDP governments, of \$3.5 billion for contaminated site cleanup. I am delighted that 60% of that is going to the north.

My question for the member is related to transit, which of course we support. The government has put hundreds of millions of dollars toward transit and continues to do so. Why would the member suggest that we put it into transit fare subsidies, which is what I think he said, as opposed to the contributions we are making directly to transit systems, which have proven to have even more effect? That would expand the system so it reached more riders and more people could use it, rather than rebating money to people who already use it, which may have some effect but not as much effect.

• (1220)

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the hon. parliamentary secretary is duty bound to defend this government's record. I would, however, like to remind him that Canada ranked 28th out of 29 OECD countries in a study involving 25 environmental indicators.

So the government is trying to tell us that it has an excellent environmental record and an excellent program, while in reality it has no plan whatsoever as far as greenhouse gas emissions are concerned. If the government had turned up at Kyoto with a plan in 1997, as the Europeans have been able to do on numerous occasions, we would not be where we are today.

Need I remind the parliamentary secretary that Canada is the only OECD country not to have a public transportation policy. That is pretty unbelievable, since Canada is supposed to have a good environmental record. Canada has, in fact, been harshly criticized, and not by some NGO. By the OECD. And why is that? Because the transportation sector is responsible for 25% of greenhouse gas emissions in Canada. This is the largest share by any one sector. If nothing is done, that figure is going to be 32% by 2010.

Why must such measures be promoted? It is precisely because if we do not, the transportation sector will produce 32% of all greenhouse gas emissions in Canada. So immediate action must be taken.

[English]

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I applaud my hon. colleague from the Bloc. He is one of the most passionate advocates for environmental action on Parliament's environment committee.

Supply

I have a simple question for him and I think it will exploit some of the absurdity in the government's handling of the fuel efficiency standard.

With 80% of the vehicles purchased in Canada being built in either the U.S. or Mexico, the government is negotiating with the Canadian auto industry about a fuel efficiency standard. Does my colleague in the Bloc think that government discussions on a fuel efficiency standard should be a common North American standard? Therefore should the government be negotiating with the United States and Mexico toward a common standard for the continent?

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Speaker, of course, we should be negotiating with our partners. Except that, between you and me, the number one problem is that we have to negotiate with one trading partner, the United States, which has decided not to sign on to Kyoto. So, that poses a significant problem.

Furthermore, I want to add that stricter standards in terms of manufacturing, such as those California has adopted, do not constitute an economic disadvantage, but rather added value. There is a definite advantage, in terms of international competitiveness, to having stricter manufacturing standards for vehicles.

In fact, if we do not want Japan and Asia to impose new more fuel efficient models and take the lead over North America, we must realize that the countries able to successfully compete on international markets will be the ones that adopted stricter standards. So there is an advantage—called a “comparative advantage” by economists—to being able to adhere to stricter manufacturing standards.

Instead of thinking that the Kyoto protocol represents a significant economic cost, we must view it as an economic opportunity to improve environmental protection and add value to new vehicles that, tomorrow, will probably set the international standard.

• (1225)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Bloc member for his comments. I have only one question.

The Liberals have said that they are unable to support this motion, due to ongoing negotiations with the industry. I would like him to comment on this.

As for the Conservatives, they say that it is very easy for the Bloc to support this motion, because there is no industry of this type in Quebec, and that this is why the Bloc will vote in favour of the NDP motion.

So, I would like the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie to comment on the reasons why the Bloc is supporting this motion. Also, I would like to know if the two reasons mentioned by the two parties are true and whether this adds to the quality of debates in the House?

Supply

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Speaker, I will start with my colleague's second statement repeating what my colleague from the Conservative Party said, namely that if we support the motion, it is because there is no automobile industry in Quebec.

It is rather facile to say this. What explains the fact that, yesterday, the Bloc was the only party in the House to propose legislation applying the Kyoto Protocol to all industrial sectors? Are they saying we propose that the manufacturing sector, which is the basis of Quebec's economy, should be excluded from the Kyoto protocol and should not have stricter standards? No, not at all. Quite to the contrary, if the automobile industry were the basis of Quebec's economy, we would call for exactly the same thing we are calling for for the manufacturing industry. That was the first thing.

Second, the government cannot go on negotiating forever with an industry that refuses to apply existing technology. I remind the House that, if the automobile industry said to the government, "We cannot improve the efficiency of our cars by 25% because the technology does not exist", I might understand. But the technology does exist. If it exists, why does the industry not voluntarily use it? If the industry agreed to use it voluntarily, we would not be compelled today to debate a motion aimed at regulations.

We are debating stricter regulations for vehicle manufacturing precisely because the automobile industry has not been willing so far to incorporate existing technology in its manufacturing methods.

It is time now to stop shilly-shallying, to do something and introduce regulations, which, in my view, must go further than those proposed by the NDP, which must specify that vehicles have to be 25% more efficient, within a reasonable amount of time, of course, for the industry. The standard will have to be gradual, but it will have to be imposed.

[*English*]

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I first want to respond very briefly to my colleague in the Bloc. He mentioned being able to deduct transit passes. Even though it is not in our motion, that is something the NDP has supported in the past. Members will recall that a private member's bill or motion sponsored by the former NDP member for Kamloops, Nelson Riis, which called on the government to do that actually passed in the House. This is all the more reason for us to be critical of succeeding Liberal finance ministers and Liberal budgets for not putting into a budget something which the House of Commons itself at one time encouraged the government to do.

I will start my speech with a bit of a historical overview. Mr. Speaker, I also want to indicate that I will be splitting my time with my colleague from Windsor West.

I remember when the first mention of greenhouse gases was made in the House. It was around 1983. At that time 90% or even higher of the members of Parliament thought that maybe the member who raised it, an NDP member from Regina, Simon de Jong, was talking about some kind of new greenhouse in which to grow tomatoes or something. There was a look of absolute bafflement on the faces of many members of Parliament, at least those who were paying attention.

Here we are 22 years later, the day after a major international accord on greenhouse gases has come into effect and I wish that we were better positioned as a country and better positioned as parliamentarians to have something to celebrate. We celebrate the accord, but we have nothing to celebrate in the Canadian context yet, because we do not have a government that is fully committed to implementing that accord. We have a government which is committed to the appearance of implementing the accord, but not a government that we get the feeling at all is committed in its gut to really making this happen. It is absolutely critical that this be made to happen.

I want to tell a little story which I read in a book years ago when I was reading about the environmental crisis as it was seen then in the 1970s. The story may have been in Barry Commoner's book *Closing Circle*.

Anyway, I ask hon. members to imagine a lily pond. The lily pond will be covered in lily pads in 28 days, but it will be covered in the following way. It will start off with one lily pad, then two lily pads, then four, then eight, then 16, then 32, then 64. I do not want to go any higher lest I tax some of the Tory backbenchers, but members can see what I mean. These problems tend to grow exponentially. This is the problem with climate change and a lot of other environmental problems.

If that lily pond is to be covered in lily pads in 28 days and that process is taking place exponentially, on the 27th day of that 28 day process, how much of the pond will be left? Fifty per cent. We are sitting there on the 27th day and somebody is saying that if we do not do something about this, some day the lily pond will be covered and we will have a problem, because it is important to us to have open water. There will be people, whether they be Liberals, Conservatives or others, who will say, "What is with you guys? Half the pond is left. What are you worrying about? There is nothing to worry about". Then on the 28th day, bingo, the game is over. The system has collapsed and it is too late to do anything about it.

This is the kind of process we are in when it comes to climate change. I do not know whether we are at the 27th day, the 26th day or the 25th day; I hope that we are at the 19th or 20th day, but we know that we are in a position where things could happen very fast. We could be putting the whole planetary environment at risk.

● (1230)

I am not under any illusions about the fact that Canada can do this by itself, but it would be a shame if a country with the resources that Canada has, the political, civil, spiritual and other resources that we have, could not bring itself to meaningfully implement the only global environmental accord that is there at the moment and on which the future of the planet depends. If we cannot do that, what kind of message does that send to the rest of the world? Countries that have fewer resources than we do, in that comprehensive meaning of the word resources, why should they even try?

We have a responsibility to the world, to the world's environment, even if we do not feel a responsibility to ourselves.

This is why we have urged the government to finally get serious about this. Getting serious about this means regulation.

We have already tried voluntary compliance. We have had this same story from government after government over the time that I have been here, "Let us just have those in the industry do it on their own". They do not do it and they are not doing it now.

It does not bother us to regulate individual behaviour. We have regulated smokers almost out of existence. Why is it that it is okay to regulate and mandate the behaviour of individual Canadians, but when it comes to corporate behaviour, that is a different story? That would have economic effects.

Banning smoking has had economic effects on community clubs, on legions, on all kinds of things, but that is okay. Why is it okay? Because there is a higher environmental goal or health goal to be met and we expect those organizations, many of them community organizations that are being hurt by this, to abide by that in the name of the larger interest, but not corporations, no. When it comes to mandatory fuel emission standards or other kinds of emissions, whenever corporations do not like it then all of sudden, let us make it voluntary. What if we did that with the smoking bans that have been put in place across the country? Some restaurants can have smoking bans and others cannot.

On the face of it there seems to be a double standard. This is what bothers us. It bothers us because the empirical evidence has accumulated to the point where we know that depending on the industry to come up with voluntary emission standards and to actually implement them is just a fool's paradise.

I would like to think it is a fool's paradise, but it is actually a cynic's paradise. What it is is a Liberals' paradise, pretending that they are doing something when we know full well that it is not going to happen and therefore they are never going to have to answer to their corporate friends for making them behave in a way that they should be behaving anyway.

Apparently the Minister of Natural Resources said that they do not want to pass this motion because they are right in the middle of negotiations. Would it not be something for the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of the Environment to have in their back pockets a motion passed by the Parliament of Canada, by the representatives of the people of Canada, which says that we want mandatory regulation of emission standards? Would that not be something to have on the table when they are negotiating? What kind of negotiator is he anyway? Does he want to go there with his hands tied behind his back, or does he want to go there with something in his hand that matters; the will of the people of Canada to have their government finally do something about this problem?

The Minister of the Environment apparently said that California brought in compulsory emission standards but it only did that after voluntary emission standards did not work. Where has the Minister of the Environment been? He thinks it is working here. Apparently he said, "We are not there yet".

Why should we have to wait? It is almost an admission that he has to go through this process. He knows in advance that it is not going to work, but he has to go through this process first. In the meantime the air gets dirtier, more people have asthma, more people die, but that is okay because we would not want the Liberals to have suffered any discomfort in their relationship with their corporate friends.

Supply

For all these reasons, and lots more could be said, I would certainly encourage individual members to support this motion. Even if their parties cannot bring themselves to support this motion, perhaps there are Liberal and Tory backbenchers who could bring themselves to support the motion because they know that ultimately this is what is going to have to happen, and the sooner it happens, the better.

● (1235)

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that the hon. member's support of the motion is based on the premise of failure, that somehow the negotiations which are currently going on with the auto sector are doomed to fail.

He asked about a backup plan. Presumably when we negotiate, we negotiate in good faith. When we negotiate in good faith, we indicate the target that we have set, that we want the auto industry to meet it and that we are going to be able to monitor that target.

If in fact there were failure, then I would presume we would have to go to the next step. However, the fact that this motion is before the House suggests somehow that there will be failure.

We have more confidence in our negotiators. We have more confidence in the fact that the industry, which has signed 14 MOUs over the years, is prepared to work with the government. Members have talked about major contributors to parties. I guess they have not heard of Bill C-24. I guess they do not know what the workers in the auto sector clearly have indicated. As far as I am concerned we want to have jobs and a strong environment. If they cannot live with that, that is their choice.

What kind of negotiations is the member looking at when in fact we have set a target and we are asking the industry to meet it?

Hon. Bill Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, the member is right in that our motion is based on a perception of failure. It is based on a perception of persistent failure on the part of the government to do its job, and the persistent failure on the part of the corporate sector to do its job. Yes, we do not have any confidence in the people who are negotiating on behalf of the government.

The parliamentary secretary may have confidence in the people who are negotiating on behalf of the government, but that says something about his gullibility, not ours.

● (1240)

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I expect that this resolution is a continuation of the excellent question by the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona yesterday on the failure of the government to meet the Kyoto agreement. Of course the Liberal answer to that is to have a conference in Montreal.

I do not know whether the member had a chance to watch CPAC last night, but Jay Myers of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters said, and I am paraphrasing, that if we took every car and truck in Canada off the road today, we would not meet Canada's Kyoto target; if we were to shut down every manufacturing plant in Canada today, we would not meet Canada's Kyoto target.

Supply

My question for the member for Elmwood—Transcona is, if the NDP agrees with these statements, and it probably will not, is the New Democratic Party living in a dream world?

Hon. Bill Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, no one has ever suggested that any one particular sector by itself, even if it was completely removed, could meet the Kyoto target. To me, this is kind of a straw man set up by the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters or anybody else who simply does not want to engage in the kind of change that is required in order to prevent climate change.

In the end, those people's children and grandchildren are going to live in the same screwed up environment as the rest of us. Why can they not see that? Why are they caught in this paradigm paralysis that they cannot see beyond the way they have always done things to see that we have to change our way of doing things instead of coming up with these rather petty *reductio ad absurdum* arguments that are supposed to lay us to waste. We are supposed to listen to them and say, "Oh, wow, let us forget it then. Let us just go on doing things the way we have been doing them".

The fact of the matter is that we can meet our Kyoto commitments by having the kind of comprehensive plan that the NDP itself has put on the table. It is a combination of things, from very simple things like having a tax system that would allow people to deduct the cost of their bus passes, to massive retrofitting of buildings, to building the east-west hydro grid that has been waiting to be built for so long, to getting serious about public mass transit. The list goes on of things we could be doing. We could invest in renewable energy, solar and wind power, instead of continuing to subsidize the oil and gas industry. No one thing is going to do it. We need to do all these things together.

To do that, we need to have a government that has the will and a government that has a plan. So far we have neither.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak about this issue. This motion is very important.

To continue with the thoughts related to the fact that there are negotiations going on right now, I think it would be a position of strength for the negotiation team to have Parliament and the House actually interested in their industry, interested in the future of it, and want to play a role in ensuring that it would be successful not only for our country but also for exports across the world. That is the important aspect that has not been raised.

NDP members have been characterized as attacking the industry. It is far from it. We are talking about the future of the industry. The future is going to be like engine plants in my riding, such as Ford. It has no replacement right now. It will be replaced with another one that has standards or emissions that are in the current format of today. The future would be a hybrid in that plant. The future is ensuring that those workers are going to have employment.

We are losing jobs because we are not manufacturing some of the newer technologies that are attracting the eye of the world, other states and other consumers. We are losing that opportunity now. That is what is really important. There is a critical timeframe for this industry. It is changing and government has a role. This is a sad excuse on behalf of the Liberal Party. It is trying to wiggle out again

on a national auto policy. That is what this is really about, to wiggle out of a responsibility.

Let us look at the CAPC recommendations that have been made, the Canadian auto parts strategy that was created over two years ago. I have not contacted it to see if it supports this motion or not. If we look at what it has come up with and how it relates to this motion with regard to emission standards and creating an environment not only where vehicles emit less and we have less pollution, cleaner air and on top of that jobs, its recommendations match up quite nicely.

There are five main recommendations and I would like to talk a bit about them. One of them is large scale investment incentives which states:

Ensure Canada's competitiveness in attracting automotive investment by improving the focus, flexibility and accessibility of government incentives which are now essential to win large-scale automotive investments or re-investments. These incentives can be linked to innovation, technology implementation, skills enhancement and sustainability.

That fits with this motion. It is sad that Canadians right now have to import the Prius, with the Canadian technology in terms of the hybrid engine, as opposed to having it manufactured and assembled by Canadians. What if that hybrid was in the Ford plant that everyone is going to watch in my community potentially go down if we do not procure a new product real soon?

We have the University of Windsor with Auto21, the Ford Centre for Excellence at St. Clair College, and we have training and development programs that do not only just talk about the new fuel efficiency and standards. I give credit to the government for funding these initiatives and starting more as needed. These are important first steps. They are also opportunities for new employment for students as well as the assemblers, who could very much use re-investment. That was the number one point it had.

The second one was infrastructure. I have spoken many times in the House of Commons about the Windsor-Detroit border crossing and infrastructure. Ontario is being punished and hammered, as well as the rest of this country, by the government's refusal to implement the recommendations of the Schwartz report unanimously passed by the city of Windsor and the county council to get gridlock off of our streets. Despite the Prime Minister's promises, which he makes a lot of everywhere else, he has yet to deliver.

The solutions are there to unplug the gridlock, but the government has yet to act on it. Despite this report being ready for weeks, despite crying foul for a long time and asking when the report was going to come forward, the government has not acted on it yet. There has not even been a political statement about the report from the Prime Minister, who said in our community that he would support a local solution. That is lack of leadership.

● (1245)

The third recommendation made by CAPC states:

—auto-focused innovation incentives such as early commercialization tax credits, consumer supports to encourage the purchase of environmentally friendly vehicle technologies and more effective supports for manufacturing process innovation.

Once again, that is all in line with reducing emissions. I am not surprised that the industry is a little bit timid on this and saying that it is not sure whether it can go to mandatory from voluntary in the time frame. It does not have the government backstopping it. This is what this is about. It is about the government trying to weasel out of an auto policy.

If the industry had the confidence that the government had an auto policy, then it could say that the political will of the people of Canada wants to have reduced emissions and wants to have auto jobs. Then there is a role for our government to participate in the renewal of the industry that would benefit our citizens in terms of employment and also cleaner air. The public support out there is unanimous for that.

That is why there is support for the Kyoto agreement among the public. The public knows that the status quo and the system that we have in place right now is a recipe for disaster, not only as we lag behind in terms of environmental issues that we pay for personally and collectively in our communities, but also by the lost opportunities in jobs as other nations surpass us time after time on newer technologies for manufacturing and development. We cannot bring that time back.

Those markets become saturated and those opportunities are lost. The innovation is a constant catch-up game from our side and that gives other nations too much of an advantage, especially when this government has no interest in dealing with other issues around fair trade. The government is not concerned with perhaps the deplorable practices that other countries have with regard to the disposal of materials after manufacturing and production. We have higher standards over here. That is not something other countries are concerned about. It gives them a cheaper ability to manufacture goods. They are not concerned with that. Thus we are falling behind.

The fourth recommendation deals with regulatory harmonization. This is interesting, it states:

Take action to coordinate and streamline regulations (including those pertaining to vehicle safety, certification and emissions) between Canada and the United States, and within Canada, in recognition of the integrated nature of the North American industry and the need to coordinate automotive-related investment marketing by Canadian jurisdictions.

We know California and a series of other states are moving to high emissions standards. Canada is losing those markets. Are we going to see them regress? Will we see other states regress? The answer is no. Standards will increase more and more. Our production has to meet those standards if we are to continue to export to those markets. Our auto workers are the most productive and have the best quality in the world.

Canadian auto workers can face the challenge of ensuring that the newer technologies get into the vehicles and are a quality product that will meet the demands of the markets they need to penetrate. I am confident in their skills and abilities if we provide them with the tools. The industry is changing. The world is changing. Let us be in the front of it, not in the back seat.

There was a fifth element on human resources. It states:

—review existing training programs and opportunities; address the impact of demographic trends on the skilled trades workforce; strengthen apprenticeship programs; and attract more young people to careers in the automotive industry

Supply

Here is a great opportunity for employment for young people. If we can get some of the newer vehicles out there, then the newer technologies will require people in service garages across this nation. There will be new standards, new skills and new opportunities for employment that we did not have before.

Let us give those young people those opportunities. Let us ensure that they are at the forefront of servicing these new vehicles, as well as the vehicles that are coming into Canada. The government has no auto policy and wants to give away our technology as it has done in other sectors, as opposed to having the manufacturing done in Canada.

● (1250)

Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I take complete exception with the NDP member making negative comments and connotations about Toyota. Toyota has a plant in my riding of Cambridge and that plant is not only the cleanest plant, it produces the cleanest vehicles, the most fuel efficient vehicles, and employs over 4,000 of the most intelligent automotive manufacturers.

This is a difficult motion not to support. Who would not support a cleaner environment? I would like to announce that the Conservative Party had a very complete platform. We had a plan for a clean environment, cleaning brownfields, and negotiating border state emissions. If we were the government right now, we would have a plan in place. We would not let the deadline go by for Kyoto. It is very easy for a party which has no potential of putting in place that kind of a plan to sit here and talk about all these great ideas.

I am the Ontario caucus chair and on a tour recently there was no doubt that there has been no leadership. The auto industry has expressed to us a number of ways to fix the environment. Although we support those ways, I must ask the member why this party would want to pick on not only one industry, but one type of vehicle?

That kind of lack of forethought and lack of complete solution is going to devastate the light vehicle market. Some 80% of these vehicles go outside of Canada and rather than creating harmony and regulations, we cannot support this motion simply because it complicates things. It is not workable and I would like to ask the member, why does the NDP insist on picking on one industry and one type of vehicle?

● (1255)

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I do not think the hon. member was listening when I talked about our auto workers in this country and that included all of them. The reference to the Toyota Prius was the fact that it is Canadian technology that is being exported. That is the problem. It is not being built in your constituency. It is being built somewhere else. I congratulate the work that is being done in your constituency—

The Deputy Speaker: I would remind the hon. member to address his comments through the Chair during the debate.

Supply

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I apologize for that, but the fact is that we want to have more examples of cleaner technologies, higher fuel efficiency and newer plants. We are not getting those right now. There are very few examples.

The government is going from crisis to crisis and negotiating in backroom deals for auto investments. It is not out there with a public policy that shows Canadians that we are going to have an investment, a strategy based on certain principles, and that we are actually going to procure that for our country.

The government is going behind the scenes, the most recent being the GM Beacon project. Who knows what is happening with that right now? I think it is good because we have not had a call lately but who knows? Why is there not an auto policy so all Canadians can understand how their tax paying money is being spent?

We are not picking on this industry. We are trying to be part of ensuring that we are going to be the top of the line in this world and climb back up the ladder on which we have fallen down.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment the member for being the first person in the House to acknowledge some of the many programs we have in place for climate change. However, would he support my efforts, especially for the north, to continue to put programs related to adaptation, not just reducing CO₂ because in the north the effects are already there. Would he support our efforts in that respect?

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for an important question that was left out of the debate to this point in time. Absolutely, we would support that. It is critical. We have seen success stories in many provinces with adaptation. It is an important incentive element that should be used to encourage people to move in those directions. There are particular needs with vehicle use that should be addressed in the north.

Hon. Judi Longfield (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and Housing, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to join in this debate today. By way of setting the stage, I would like to remind members that I represent the riding of Whitby—Oshawa in the region of Durham. The region of Durham is home to General Motors and to the head office of BMW Canada.

My constituents are concerned not only about the health of the auto industry in Canada but also the health of the environment. The government has made a commitment to Kyoto and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In terms of working with all sectors, it is extremely important that we get a general buy-in from the public.

My problem with the motion on the floor today is the notion that the only way to achieve any reduction in greenhouse gases and the only way to get the auto industry to comply is through a mandatory regulatory regime.

I spent a number of years in the education profession working with people. It has always been my view and understanding that if parties can sit down and negotiate a settlement, they feel they are part of the solution.

I talk to members of the automotive industry on a regular basis. They have never suggested that they do not want to be a part of the solution. The fact that we are currently in negotiations says

something about the state of the relationship between the auto industry and Canadians and government. I am not just talking about General Motors or Ford. These negotiations involve all groups. The member across has told us that Toyota is in his riding. It is one of the parties at the table, together with Ford and General Motors and many others.

The automotive industry is a very competitive industry, but it has managed to get by that for the common good. It understands that good economic policy is not exclusive to good environmental policy. The industry wants to be a part of the solution.

A voluntary company average fuel consumption program has been in place for many years. I would like to give the House a couple of facts which the opposition does not want to acknowledge. Since 1986, passenger cars have averaged 8% better than the voluntary CAF targets; 2003-04 passenger cars averaged 8% better than the voluntary targets; and light trucks were 3% better.

There has been an improvement, but perhaps not as great as we would wish. That is why we are now currently at the negotiating table. We are talking about approximately five megatonnes. Nobody in the industry would say that is not an appropriate amount to be asked to reduce. Industry is asking us to find ways to do it, and it may not necessarily be through a regimented mandatory system. There should be an opportunity to put various things on the table.

The suggestion that somehow industry is bad and never wants to do its part belies the fact that currently there are about 14 memorandums of agreement in place with respect to the automotive industry. Industry is not reneging on those. There has been compliance. To suggest that if we do not have mandatory requirements, there will not be compliance shortchanges the industry.

A suggestion was made that we on the Liberal side are only supportive of big business and big corporations to the exclusion of the environment. I would remind members that big business needs the very people that they say they represent, workers and families. They are my constituents. I want them to have good jobs. I want them to have a clean and healthy environment. I am a mother with a child who has asthma and allergies. I want to see a better and cleaner environment. All sectors need to work together to see that happen.

• (1300)

We should also put on the table that while no one is suggesting that the emissions from autos are not causing some problems to the environment, I would also indicate that one cord of wood burned in a fireplace this winter will create more smog-causing emissions than the entire lifetime emissions produced by 10 Tier 2 SUVs. In fact one would have to drive 37 new Tier 2 SUVs around the earth's circumference to equal the emissions from one cord of wood that is burned. There are a number of things that we are doing in every day life that are adding to smog or emissions. Any approach we take has to take all these things into consideration.

One could paint a room, use one gallon of oil-based paint, and that would generate more smog than a Tier 2 vehicle moving from Toronto to Vancouver and back. Are we going to suddenly say that there are mandatory limits on how much paint an individual can use? No, but it is important and appropriate that we get the message out in terms of some of things we are doing with the one tonne challenge, to indicate to individuals what they can do.

It does not matter what kind of a vehicle an auto industry produces. The fact is someone has to buy it. I do not think we want to limit people's choices. What we should be doing is putting forth the options that if a person buys this, these are the benefits to the environment. At the same time, I am encouraging my government to look at ways we can encourage people to do the right thing, to look at making comparisons about the advantages of buying vehicles that are much more fuel efficient.

To suggest that we do not have an auto strategy is ludicrous. Talk to Ford. It knows we have an auto strategy. General Motors will soon know that we have an auto strategy. We are working very closely with those people, and part of it is for research and development so they can continue to put a better, more efficient vehicle on the market for all of us.

I am a little concerned that somehow we are painted as being anti-environment and against reduced emission strategies. I want to see this happen. I want to see it happen in many areas, but I do not think we should be picking on this one and saying it has to be mandatory. We need to work together. I would encourage us all to continue to work together to try to get what is best for our children and future children. That is part of the reason why Canada signed on to the Kyoto accord. It understands and appreciates that if we sit back and do nothing, what will we leave to future generations?

One party across the way says that this is job-killing, that this is inappropriate and that we should not be doing it. The other says that we have to regulate and make it mandatory, that we should not have a buy-in, that we should not get people to understand that everybody needs to do their part. I would challenge members on one side to say, "Have you met the one tonne challenge? What are you doing to promote it? What are you doing in your own daily lives to assist?"

I am not here as an apologist for the auto industry. I am not saying that we should let it off the hook in terms of coming to the table, of doing its part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and of meeting the challenge that we have put before it in terms of a five megatonne reduction. We absolutely need to do that. Do we need to be tough at the negotiation tables? Absolutely, but we do not need to be so entrenched that there is only one way to do this. I think through voluntary negotiation we could achieve the very targets the member wants to see happen.

• (1305)

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's comments that it is important to get all the people to the table. The North American market is integrated, yet we have a government that is negotiating a fuel efficiency standard with the Canadian part of the market. The reality is that 80% of the vehicles that are purchased in Canada are built in the United States or Mexico.

Supply

Should the government's negotiation of a fuel efficiency standard include discussions with the United States and Mexico? Could the government confirm that it is currently negotiating with the United States and Mexico on a common fuel efficiency standard, and if not, why not?

Hon. Judi Longfield: Mr. Speaker, what I can confirm is we are in negotiations with Canadian—

Mr. Jeff Watson: On 20% of the market.

Hon. Judi Longfield: Yes, it is 20% of the market, but it is an important part. We are sitting down at the table negotiating. When they talk to us, they understand that they are 20% of the market. We are asking them what they believe is achievable and what will meet common goals.

I think through voluntary negotiation, given that they understand that they are only 20% of the market, and given that they understand what our needs and requirements are, we can come to a solution that is satisfactory to both.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was very upset to hear that she thought we were accusing her party of being an apologist for the auto industry. I think it is fairly clear what we were saying. The government stands up in the House and says that it loves little children, dogs and balloons, as we all do, and, therefore, why do we not all make the world a happier place?

We are saying that the government has absolutely no intention of coming through on anything to do with Kyoto. It would have us talk about the one tonne challenge and how we should not open our cans of paint because it would spend more than driving my car to Vancouver and back. I will go home this weekend and paint to see if that is true.

I like the idea of voluntary standards. For example, why do we not have a voluntary gun control registry? With the hundreds of millions of dollars we have spent, I think a lot of Canadians would like a voluntary gun control registry. No, the government said that it could not have voluntary standards. What about voluntary drinking and driving regulations?

How about if we take the voluntary drinking and driving regulations and turn it into this idea of credits? If people are sober, then they should be able to sell their drinking and driving credits to people who are drunk. With the logic of the government, what a fantastic idea. If I drive nine times sober, I should for the tenth time be able to drive through drunk because I can buy a credit from someone who does not like to have a couple of shots before he goes home from work. That is the idea of voluntary credits.

I would like to ask the hon. member this. Where in this world have we ever seen voluntary emission standards? The government brought in voluntary labelling of genetically modified foods, and we have not seen a single company comply. When we talk about mandatory, it so we can get something done. I would like to see if we will get it done.

Supply

• (1310)

Hon. Judi Longfield: Mr. Speaker, that was a very amusing tirade from the member. I am not suggesting that they can decide whether they want to do it or not. I am talking about the negotiations. The member should understand that negotiations, and I believe in free collective bargaining, means that both sides are putting their views forward without a prejudgment.

I believe that at the end of the day they have to come to an agreement. When they have agreed upon the levels, they will indeed live up to their agreement. I am not talking about whether they might or might not do it. I am talking about the way in which we reach the final agreement.

Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, given that we have such a huge economic problem in Ontario with the restrictions at the border in Windsor and given the government's promises to clean up the environment, why has the government not moved forward on solving the border lineups where trucks idle for four, five or six hours in lineups 12 to 15 kilometres long. By fixing this problem at the cost of well under \$1 billion, it would improve Ontario's economy by \$5 billion. Why has the government not moved forward on such a simple solution?

Hon. Judi Longfield: Mr. Speaker, when members are in opposition everything seems simple because they do not have to follow through.

I would indicate to the member opposite that we are in negotiations, that we are working. This is not something that the Government of Canada can do solely on its own. It deals with the city of Windsor and other governments.

Everything is easy when members are in opposition.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate today.

The issue clearly is that some of us in the House have recognized the fact that climate change is a reality. The fact is that this government signed the Kyoto protocol. It came into effect. The fact is that some in the House did not even believe that Russia would sign on. It did. Some of them did not believe it would ever come into effect. It has.

We on this side of the House are taking our responsibilities very seriously. In fact, as the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Natural Resources have indicated, there is a long list of achievements by the government with regard to dealing with this issue. This issue is not, however, solely a federal issue. It is a federal-provincial-municipal issue and obviously an individual issue.

The fact is that some in the House ridicule the one tonne challenge. It is a comprehensive approach, and clearly the one tonne challenge is one element to engage Canadians. Apparently some in the House do not believe we should engage Canadians directly. I believe that is important. Everyone has their own part to play. I would suggest that this is a good way to do it.

I would also point out that we are fully engaged with municipal governments. The announcement by the minister of state dealing with infrastructure clearly shows that in the \$5 billion proposal over

five years on the gas tax aimed at green infrastructure. Whether we are talking sewer improvements or water treatment plants, et cetera, it is obviously very important in helping in the battle.

Yet another element is working with the provinces. Again, somehow the suggestion is that we do not have a plan. Maybe some of the members should read the climate change plan for Canada 2002 and also look at the fact that in any plan there are needs for refinements. We have already said that. The minister has said that. A budget is coming out. I would suggest that after the budget some of these members take a look at the plan as it has been refined and then try to say to us that we do not have a plan. It would be very hard.

Government is about choices. It is about making the right decision. We made the right decision by signing the Kyoto protocol. We announced in Montreal just yesterday that the United Nations framework conference on climate change will be held in Montreal at the end of November. It will focus very strongly on Canada and Canadian leadership. This is an opportunity where we will have 7,000 to 10,000 delegates coming to Canada. It is an opportunity for the Minister of the Environment and the Prime Minister to certainly showcase and talk about the initiatives Canada is doing. Obviously Canada cannot and is not doing it alone; over 140 countries have signed on to the Kyoto protocol, but it is a first step.

We are going to be looking beyond Kyoto as well. The Minister of the Environment has talked very clearly about the need for a competitive economy, the need for a strong economy. Therefore, a strong economy and a strong environment can be married together.

We understand the importance of the auto sector. We have a very active and engaged auto caucus on this side of the House. Under the leadership of my colleagues on this side of the House, we have understood and have worked collaboratively with the industry. I am delighted to hear that the Conservatives have an auto caucus. I think it is important that we all engage. We do not all have the definitive answers, but I hope that we can work together.

I would suggest that our mission is to deal with the issue of greenhouse gas reductions. It is important that we do that. Clearly, working with the auto sector has been and continues to be an important aspect of government policy. We have signed 14 MOUs with the auto sector. The auto sector has adapted. One of the strengths is the Canadian workers in this country.

The gentleman across the way talked about the Toyota plant in Cambridge. I had the pleasure of visiting that plant last summer and I can tell hon. members that it is probably cleaner than a hospital. I must tell the hon. member that when the Japanese were looking around the world to produce the Lexus outside of Japan for the first time, they picked Canada. They picked Cambridge because of the quality of the workmanship, because of the standards of the workers and in fact because of the social programs, et cetera. We could go on and on. The fact is that our auto sector in this country is second to none.

●(1315)

I would suggest that whether it is in Cambridge, Windsor, Oshawa or Oakville, wherever it happens to be, the fact is that we understand and the auto sector understands that we need to be fully engaged on this topic. Clearly that is in the auto sector's interest. It knows what the consumers are looking for in terms of fuel efficient vehicles. We know what they are looking for and the auto manufacturers know that. That is why they have been responding, and I think very effectively, in that regard over the years.

On the suggestion that we are looking for a voluntary agreement, there are many voluntary things that go on in our society. In this case, there is a notion that somehow we are not going to make an agreement. Let me say that in 1998 the EU came to a voluntary agreement with its car makers and in fact on the whole issue of reduction of CO₂: 140g/kilometre by 2008.

The fact is that we have an opportunity to work with the industry. We are negotiating with the industry. Obviously I am not going to be able to say at this point, because I have no crystal ball, how it is going to work out, but I am very confident that the negotiators at the table understand what we want. I believe very strongly that we will see this.

The member for Oshawa has indicated that he is concerned about jobs in his community. Naturally so. We are not trying to put people out of work. What we are trying to say is that we want to make sure the economy is strong and the environment is strong, working in ways which are effective. Let us look at other jurisdictions, including Australia, which did not sign the Kyoto protocol but which as well has voluntary standards committing its industry by 2010.

The fact is that in our discussions we have to remember that climate change is in fact something which is not only in the auto sector, with the large emitters. We and the Minister of the Environment have taken the approach of working with industries, saying "this is what we are looking for", and I think setting a standard, which is very important in the sense that rather than scaring people we are saying, "We are prepared to work effectively and if in fact certain things do not happen, then we will go to the next step".

I think the reality is, no pun intended, that the whole climate has changed in terms of how we are dealing with industries in this country. People are saying that we are in fact recognizing the role of a strong economy and a strong environment.

No one is more committed to ensuring that we have a strong environment, with clean air and clean water, than this Minister of the Environment. I want to make it very clear that on this side of the House we agree with the objective, and I am sure all members do. Some of us may differ on how we get there, but the reality is that we do agree. We need to have a cleaner environment.

Clearly the synergy is needed with stakeholders and with all orders of government. I think there are certain incentives. On that side of the House, people talk about incentives. We agree. Obviously we need to have incentives. Whether it is dealing with hybrid vehicles, hydrogen or the economy, incentives are important.

We talk about wind power and its importance. Again, we have 4,000 megawatts to power one million homes in this country. The

Supply

fact is that this is extremely important. It is something that this government is committed to and has demonstrated in budget after budget and, I would point out, it will do so in this next budget. I know that those members are somewhat like little kids at Christmastime; they are anxious to get in there and see what is under the tree. The fact is that all departments have a responsibility. Once the budget is released, I would suspect that we will see some very positive elements there as well.

One of my colleagues mentioned the fact that in government we actually have to be responsible for what we say. I would point out that we have made it very clear that this government is looking at a comprehensive approach in dealing with climate change, not in just one sector but in many sectors.

I welcome the fact that the New Democratic Party has put this issue before the House, because clearly we all are interested in the same objective. The hon. member who serves on committee with me knows that there is no one more committed in terms of moving this agenda forward, I would suspect, than this Minister of the Environment. Certainly as his parliamentary secretary I want suggest to those members that, rather than criticism, if they have constructive alternatives they should put them forward.

●(1320)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am deeply saddened to have missed the beginning of the parliamentary secretary's speech. I was on a call-in show in Victoria and another one in Vancouver. Canadians are deeply impressed with this motion and the concept of finally bringing forward mandatory regulations. I am glad to see the Liberals applauding it.

The question, the premise or the philosophy of this motion is between mandatory and voluntary regulations. The Liberals are asking us to trust them after these many years of promises and budget after budget showing that emissions have gone up in Canada, popping us to the back of the OECD and making us an international pariah with respect to Kyoto. Who else shows up on the day of the exam without a plan or any concept of how to get there?

My question is with respect to the voluntary requirement. I will take the Americans as a quick example. In 1975 the American Environmental Protection Agency was requiring that the big three automakers make public the mileage their vehicles were getting. They said, "No, we cannot do that. It is going to expose us to unfair practices and unfair competition."

The EPA threatened with regulations and said it would make this mandatory. Of course then the big three automakers started to disclose their mileage rates and now the rates are part of purchasing a car. Canadians and Americans clearly understand that when they purchase a car they find out what mileage they will get from the vehicle.

Why is the parliamentary secretary so resistant to the idea of increasing the strength of the government's hand in the negotiations with automakers? We say that it has been a long time and there has been a lot of waiting. This government has not had the foresight to just enforce mandatory regulations and then bring about actual change rather than just rhetoric.

Supply

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Speaker, first of all, when someone comes to write an exam they obviously should study before they come in. Otherwise it is easier to mark, and it is a lot easier to mark because there is nothing on the paper if someone has not studied.

This member talks about the need to regulate. The NDP's solution to a lot of things is regulate and regulate. What the government and I are suggesting is that we are in negotiations. We are in negotiations and I cannot at this point say what the conclusions will be. Perhaps the hon. member already knows.

The reality is that we are in negotiations. Obviously we would like to have a voluntary agreement, but one in which we are able to assess that agreement. Somehow the member thinks that we have a voluntary agreement and then the government says to come back in five or six years. The reality is that we measure the trajectory. If it goes up we are in fact then able to assess it. I would suggest that we assess it.

• (1325)

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have no agreement on a fuel efficiency standard with Canadian industry yet. Canadian industry of course only accounts for 20% of the vehicles that are purchased here in Canada. Would the hon. parliamentary secretary answer with regard to the other 80% purchased here in Canada but produced in the United States and in Mexico?

Why has the government not brought the U.S. and Mexico to the table in negotiating a continental standard for fuel efficiency, one that would allow the entire industry to abate its costs across the industry over a defined period of time and share that? Is it because this government does not have the credibility with the United States to bring the Americans to the table and bring them into a common continental agreement?

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Speaker, I would not use the word "credibility" coming from a party that in fact until very recently denied the issue of climate change, a party which seemed to suggest that Kyoto would not in fact be ratified and that in fact Russia would not ratify. The fact is that in the United States about 42 states are working on Kyoto standards, to meet them.

On an international agreement, the member used the word "continental", but I will avoid the word "continental". I would suggest a collaborative approach. The fact is the industry itself has talked about this. There is harmonization that has gone on in terms of certain safety standards in certain areas of the industry. The fact is that may be an option, but at the moment the issue before the House is whether or not it is voluntary.

If in fact this was really being pushed and was really needed I am sure the United States would have put it on the table, but the reality is that the Americans are doing their part. We are doing our part and at the moment we are going to have a clearly made in Canada solution, dealing with an industry which we have been able to work with very well.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Winnipeg North and I will be sharing this time slot.

When I was getting ready to speak today I was going to start this somewhat differently but, having listened to some of the comments

from the member for Oshawa, I decided I should talk a bit about our responsibility, both as a party and as a government, in terms of dealing with this issue.

We have to do that in the context of the history of the auto industry, and I am intimately involved in that history. My father worked on both the U.S. side and the Canadian side of the border before he passed away. I have extended family members who currently work in the auto industry. For the last 15 years before I was elected, I was directly responsible in my legal work and the legal plan that I administered in Windsor was directly connected to the auto industry.

The comments I heard from the member for Oshawa, that we do not care about jobs, that we do not care about the industry and that we do not understand the industry, are accusations that I totally refute. The reality is that if we do not get serious about dealing with the environmental consequences that flow from the use of motor vehicles in North America, if we do not play a significant role in cleaning up the use of the vehicles, we will get left way behind. We will continue to see Toyota, the Chinese industry that is coming very rapidly, taking more and more of our market share. Those imports will continue to swamp this market in both Canada and the United States.

We are at the cusp of one of those times historically when we have to act and we do not have a lot of time. Our concern is all about maintaining the industry, but even more important, about growing the industry, making the Canadian part of that industry stronger, not weaker. The do nothing attitude that I am hearing from both the Liberals and the Conservatives is not acceptable. It will not get us there.

Canadian workers, as we heard from my colleague from Windsor West, are among the best in the world if not the best. They have no superiors, although they may have some peers. When we look at the history of what has happened with the auto industry in North America, particularly in the last 50 years, there has been a significant advancement, especially in protecting workers' rights and their right to organize. My father was probably part of the Ford strike that finally forced Ford, by way of that strike, to have compulsory recognition of the union. It is the basis in many respects for our collective bargaining arrangements in this country, not just in the auto sector but right across the board.

There have been advancements on health and safety issues. I think of the strikes that my family went through during the sixties to get parity with workers in the United States. I think of what went on in the sixties and the seventies to get the auto industry to address the issues of auto safety. I think of the fight to get smaller vehicles built in North America after the oil crises of the early seventies. In every case, if one studies that history and understands it or lives it as I have, we cannot talk voluntary. We do not tie our hands behind our back. As the government, as the representative of the people of this country, it is often necessary for us to say that we will mandate these standards.

Supply

● (1330)

The Liberals have repeatedly told us today about the 14 MOUs and how great it has been that the auto industry has met the requirements under those MOUs. What the Liberals have not told us is that not one of those MOUs was signed before the industry was compelled to meet those standards in the United States under a different administration than is in that country now. In every single case those standards were met and agreed upon in Canada only after they were made compulsory in the United States. We all know how integrated the industry is.

Nothing new was going on there. Nothing voluntary was being achieved in the way of advanced standards. They were already compulsory. However, because we form such a small part of that market, roughly 10%, what was going on in the U.S. mandated that those standards had to be implemented and met. No pluses for that.

The reality is that right now the U.S. administration is not pushing either fuel efficiency or emission standards. It has abandoned the field. As a consequence of that, the field has now been taken over by individual states in the United States, led by California but followed closely by Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island, New Jersey and, just last week, Washington.

As of the first of this year, California made certain standards compulsory. We will probably hear more today about the 25% solution, which is to increase fuel efficiency by 25% and reduce noxious emissions by roughly the same amount. Illinois has signalled that it too will sign on to the plan. When we add up the population of those states, it adds up to more than half the population of the United States.

If we sit on the sidelines, which could be the consequence of the negotiations that are going on now, and if they turn out to be voluntary, all of those states will be ahead of us. This begs the question: Will the Chrysler minivan, which we build better than anyone in the world and which is assembled in Windsor, have access to those markets as a result of our dithering here in Canada?

When we talk about job security, we should be thinking about what in fact is happening and not some fearmongering coming from the opposition, the government and, to some degree, from the auto industry.

What is very interesting is that California has shown us technology that will let us meet those standards. We are not talking about future patents or future inventions. The technology exists right now. California has shown us that we not only have that technology but that it is affordable and can be installed in the average vehicle.

I have a list outlining some of the material from California, but depending on which one we use and how many we use, we can get that 25% solution by spending roughly \$1,100 to \$1,200 Canadian per vehicle. That money would be recouped by the savings on fuel of about \$1,000 a year. The initial capital expenditure on the purchase price could be paid off in a year or a year and half and additional dollars would be saved after that. If that technology were put on the minivan that is assembled in Windsor, it would open up markets in both Canada and the United States.

I am quite confident in Canadian workers, whether they be engineers, plant managers, supervisors, skilled tradespeople or the man or woman working on the line. They have the ability to do this. What we are saying is that we must make sure that the auto industry performs and that the people who make the decisions allow this to happen.

● (1335)

Ms. Bev Oda (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member.

He is talking about voluntary and mandatory, but obviously what we all want is meaningful change to better our environment.

The department's memos indicate that Kyoto has serious problems and design weaknesses, namely, that it would not stop or even slow down global warming and fails to provide proper incentives for technologies that may transform the energy sector over the long term. We are not just talking about our environment in Canada. We understand that the auto industry is an international industry and marketplace, et cetera, but our air, water and environment also cross borders.

I would like to know what the motion being proposed would do to deal with the fact that there is nothing in the Kyoto accord that obligates developing countries to improve their environments. Only 32% of the global emissions are currently covered under Kyoto. What does this motion do to address the other 68%?

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Speaker, the first thing I would point out is that the motion is about the auto industry. The question has more to do with the Kyoto standards for all sectors of the economy and the whole of the environment.

In answer to the member's basic question, I think she has missed the point regarding the motion. The motion is about whether we are going to approach the problem that 25% of all of the carbon dioxide being released in this country is coming out of the tailpipes of our vehicles. Are we going to require that issue to be dealt with in a quick, efficient fashion and thereby mandate the regulations or are we going to allow the industry to continue on as it has for the better part of this last decade by not seriously addressing this issue? That is what it is about.

Coming out of this, if we do the job right we will begin to address emissions right across the globe because we will be developing and deploying the technology that will deal with those emissions in the undeveloped world.

● (1340)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was astonished to hear the member from the loyal opposition say that we did not provide support for technology when the rest of her party constantly criticizes the technology partnerships program.

We have put funds into technology related to reducing greenhouse gases, such as ethanol, renewable energies like solar and wind, and biological solutions for greenhouse gases. Hopefully the NDP will support the money that we are investing in renewable energies, even if the other opposition members do not.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Speaker, I have two points that I want to make in response to the hon. member's question.

Supply

First, on one hand we hear about the amount of money that is going into research, but what we do not hear, because it is not happening, are the resources being deployed, the tax system being amended and subsidies being deployed. We need to deploy the technologies that we have.

I spent the last four years in the House as the environment and energy critic for my party. Everything I learned in that process tells me that we can deal with our environmental problems with existing technology and know-how. That is not where the problem is. We really do not need more research and development. We need to deploy the resources, the knowledge and the technology that we already have. No one can tell me one problem that we cannot resolve with what we already know.

The second point I want to make quickly is that as long as we continue to subsidize the fossil fuel industry to the tune of \$1 billion to \$1.5 billion a year, we are not being very serious about dealing with climate change and global warming.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to join my colleagues in this debate and to follow the member for Windsor—Tecumseh who gave us a very good perspective on this whole issue. I want to thank our leader, the member for Toronto—Danforth, and the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley for their leadership on this very important matter of the future of the planet and for their vision in bringing forward the motion that is before the House today.

I am proud to be associated with the motion which is visionary, very decisive, substantive and I must say very timely. Given the fact that yesterday was the day that the Kyoto protocol came into effect and given the clear revelation that the government to this day has no plan in place to seriously meet our targets under Kyoto, it is critically imperative that we give direction to the government on how to do just that.

It is also important to note that we are debating this matter at the same time that the alternative federal budget was released in Ottawa. The alternative federal budget is sponsored by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. For 10 or more years it has been far more accurate in predicting budget forecasts than has been the government itself with all 19 of its so-called big bank economists and forecasters.

If we are going to take advice from anywhere, let us take it from the document “Alternative Federal Budget 2005: It's Time”, because as my colleague has said, the centre knows what it is doing. I cannot think of a more appropriate subject matter for relating part of that title, “It's time”, than the environment and the future of this planet.

These individuals, who are so accurate in their forecast and so visionary in their recommendations, clearly point us in the direction of decisive action on the environment. The document, which is hot off the press, states on page 55:

Canada's emissions of greenhouse gases are among the highest in the world on a per capita basis and are now 20% higher than our Kyoto baseline level in 1990. Serious action—and not just more hot air—is now needed for Canada to meet its Kyoto commitments—

Absolutely this is what is needed: action, timelines, decisive action like that outlined in our motion, not hot air, the hot air that we have seen from the Liberals over the last number of years time and time again. The document also states:

The environment and the economy are inextricably linked. Decisions taken in either realm will inevitably have a lasting impact on both. Unless Canada takes decisive steps to make our economy and industries more environmentally friendly, then both our environment and economy will deteriorate over the longer term.

Those are prophetic words. I do not think anyone could disagree with those words. We are talking not only about the future of the planet; we are talking about our economy and what kind of future we are handing over to future generations.

While we are on the topic of the alternative federal budget and the accuracy in its forecasts, let me point out that this year the alternative federal budget is forecasting a \$45 billion surplus over the next three years. Let us remember that the alternative federal budget has been accurate over the last six years, or five budgets.

Let us remember that the government over those five budgets has been out \$61 billion. As a result of that lowballing exercise, that is money that has disappeared, gone off as automatic payments against the debt without consideration to the huge deficit we have today in terms of human needs and our environment.

Let us juxtapose the \$45 billion projected over the next three years with the \$21 billion predicted by the Minister of Finance in his last economic forecast.

● (1345)

Let us remember that the government is pretending to be honest in terms of this year's surplus. It has acknowledged that we are talking about a minimum of a \$9 billion surplus this year, which more likely is \$11 billion, but then it is prepared to slip back into its old ways of trying to pull the wool over the eyes of Canadians and give us false numbers, lowball forecasts, so in fact we end up with the exact same problem we have had for the last number of years.

Canadians want accountability. They want Parliament to ensure that first and foremost we invest in saving this planet, in dealing with building a sustainable economy for now and future generations.

I want to refer to the hard work of the finance committee in the prebudget process. That process was instrumental in building the case for the motion before us today. Some 400 groups and individuals came before us to give us their views about what needs to happen in this country. They were all clear about the importance of ensuring the survival of the planet. These people were from all types of groups, not just environmental organizations. Everyone spoke with one voice. They know that the quality of the air we breathe and the atmosphere in which we live affect us whether we are young or old, in our businesses, our schools and universities, our jobs, our homes. All of it literally impacts on every aspect of our lives and the lives of our families.

I want to focus specifically on some of the environmental groups' presentations to our committee. We heard from so many. The Green Budget Coalition, which represents some 20 national environmental and conservation groups, gave us an excellent report and an excellent plan of action. I want to refer to the Canadian Urban Transit Association, which represents more than 100 of Canada's public transit systems, and other organizations whose roots also extend into small and large communities right across the country. These groups described a neglected environmental situation requiring urgent attention and federal leadership.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development ranks Canada's environmental performance 28th out of 29 member industrial countries. Imagine that a country as rich as Canada, with the kind of energy and creativity that is so obvious all around us, is 28th out of 29 industrial countries when it comes to environmental performance.

The real life impact of that record was hammered home last week in eastern Canada by an extensive off-season pollution health warning. One paper described the local scene here as "by far the worst air pollution episode since pollution measurements were first kept". Goodness gracious, is that not enough for members opposite to act? Is that not a call to arms when it comes to the future of the planet? Air quality was categorized as poor. Asthmatics and those with heart conditions were especially warned to exercise caution. In February, in the heart of this country, in the middle of winter, there was a smog warning of significant and serious proportions.

That Canadians are faced with this situation today with a Liberal government that still claims it has been doing everything it can to improve our air quality is absolutely appalling. It is time for the Liberals to step aside, or to decide finally to do something. We are ready to take over and do what is necessary to ensure that the kind of plan we have produced, the Kyoto plan and a plan to sustain our economy and build on that, is adopted as soon as possible.

The David Suzuki Foundation reminded us that the OECD has found that Canada relies too heavily on voluntary programs and incentives and not enough on regulations and economic instruments. This is from the market friendly OECD. This is not from some left wing think tank. An organization that is concerned about the free market says that we have to do more in terms of regulations and use of economic instruments.

• (1350)

My time is almost up and I have barely touched the tip of the iceberg in terms of this very serious issue. I hope above all that I have left a clear message that today's motion is offered to Canadians as a constructive instrument to help ensure that we sustain our planet, that we stop very serious health problems from arising because of greenhouse gas emissions.

We are ready to take decisive action that calls for mandatory emission standards. We cannot rely on voluntary standards because they have not worked. We cannot wait. The situation is too dire and the needs are too urgent. We have to act now with political courage and great determination.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are a little more than three and a half hours into the debate on today's motion. About

Supply

20 minutes ago the hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh finally said that the NDP is seeking a 25% improvement in fuel efficiency.

What is the timeline for achieving the 25% increase in fuel efficiency? Would we get existing technologies to new products quickly enough to meet that timeline, or do we need more time to hit a 25% fuel efficiency increase standard?

Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, I want the members on the Conservative side to know that if the motion is approved, which we hope it will be, we believe it can be brought into effect almost immediately. We can move expeditiously toward the implementation of mandatory emission standards.

We believe that will achieve the 25% target, if we are committed to doing this and we do it immediately, by the year 2012. We are certainly in a hurry. Time is moving on. We do not have time to lose. We have to do this now in order to achieve those targets in another six or seven years.

We have heard very little from the Conservatives on any specific timelines, goals or targets in terms of dealing with the situation. They have no plan. Like the Liberals, not only do they refuse to accept our motion but they also have no plan, period. They prefer to look to the past instead of to the future. They prefer to leave it to the market to handle our future instead of taking full responsibility and guiding us toward a future of prosperity and tremendous potential.

• (1355)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted the member mentioned that we managed the finances so well that there was \$45 billion to pay off the very large debt so that we could have various programs, such as to reduce greenhouse gases. There is also the millennium scholarship, the biggest scholarship in Canadian history. There is also the record health care agreement we made with the provinces.

My question is related to employment in the auto industry. The opposition suggested that reducing emissions would be of great harm to the auto industry. We are making the point that we are looking at autos that are sold here, not made here. Of the autos made in Canada, 80% are exported anyway so this is not going to hurt the auto industry from our perspective. I would like to know from the member if she thinks that her party's motion would hurt the auto industry.

Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, before I answer that question I cannot help but respond to the member's assertion that the government has done great things such as the millennium scholarship fund.

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We just heard from the Auditor General yesterday who said that \$7 billion in foundations is sitting there untapped. In terms of the scholarship fund, students are dying to get into university but cannot because the tuition is too high, and the government is allowing the foundation to sit on \$690 million in interest alone because of inaction. It could have used that money to pay the tuitions for 200,000 students.

Shame on the Liberals when it comes to education. Shame on the Liberals when it comes to the environment. We have heard nothing but empty rhetoric from Liberals and no decisive plan of action.

The question about the auto workers is a very important one. The parliamentary secretary should know that we have been working with both the environmental community and representatives of the auto workers. We have developed a win-win plan for climate change.

The auto sector is vital to our economy. We have had great success and continuing that success will be based on Canadian auto producers taking the North American lead on future manufacturing, design and production. The future of this production is green. What would hurt the auto dealers and the industry generally is not tax disincentives. It would be refusing to leap at the opportunities lying open at this critical moment.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the St. Joseph's Catholic Women's League in Kindersley, Saskatchewan, like a majority of Canadians, is alarmed at the Liberals' half-baked measures to combat child exploitation.

CWL President Susan Seidel, Communications Convenor Debbie Wagner, and Nancy Reece circulated a petition to demand the government raise the age of consent and close the Liberal loophole of artistic merit that gives child abusers a get out of jail free card.

There are many reasons, from moral and psychological to physical, why we must establish clear laws to differentiate between normal personal relationships and the disaster of twisted adults preying on children.

Canadians have a right to their own thoughts, but society must protect our children when those thoughts lead to unacceptable actions. The Liberals cannot continue to shortchange our police forces, water down our laws, and provide loopholes to monsters and think they are done with this issue.

I join my constituents in demanding real action to protect our kids.

* * *

CHILD CARE

Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to learn that the member for Edmonton—Spruce Grove agrees with the concept that women have earned the right to make their own choices.

However, she and her party support only one approach to helping parents care for their children while they are working. Tax cuts are not a program but a mechanism that disproportionately benefits high income parents. Where is the choice in this?

On the other hand, the Liberal approach offers real choice for parents by providing a safe, regulated, and supportive environment that incorporates early learning with care. It provides choice and opportunity for parents to pursue both education and economic stability for their families.

The Conservative Party should stop pretending to advocate equality for women when it speaks about choice, when in reality, it advocates turning back the clock to a time when women had little or no control over their lives.

* * *

• (1400)

[*Translation*]

OBSERVATOIRE DU MONT MÉGANTIC

Mr. Marc Boulianne (Mégantic—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, astronomy in Quebec is world renowned. The Observatoire du Mont Mégantic bears witness to Quebec's knowledge in the field—world class expertise, achieved in partnership with its universities.

I commend all the pioneers of Quebec astronomy and astrophysics, including Mr. Racine, who have made the Mont-Mégantic astrolabe a scientific research centre that responds to the aspirations of Quebecers.

To keep its research at the leading edge and to uphold the prestige of its institutions, this sector needs proper long-term funding. The Bloc Québécois urges the federal government to support the long-term plan of the Coalition for Astronomy in the next budget in order to help astronomy flourish and retain its position as one of the world's best.

* * *

RAFIK HARIRI

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my sympathy to the people of Lebanon, whose former prime minister, Rafik Hariri, has been assassinated.

[*English*]

Death is something that is inevitable and expected, but always a shock. The death of Mr. Hariri was particularly devastating. The whole country is indeed in a state of shock after losing a man who held such hope for his country.

[*Translation*]

The former prime minister was a much loved leader and a benefactor to young people seeking a better education, but lacking the means to pursue their dreams.

A philanthropist, he believed in moving beyond diversity, creating harmony and building a society free from tyranny.

I offer my most sincere condolences to Canadians of Lebanese origin in my riding, Laval—Les Îles, and in Canada, as they mourn Mr. Hariri, a man of vision.

* * *

[English]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as spring approaches, many farmers in my riding are facing a crisis. Bills remain unpaid from the previous year. Payouts from CAIS have not arrived. Seed and supplies for the upcoming season need to be purchased.

How can a farmer put a crop in the ground when he is not able to purchase seed for the upcoming season?

The agricultural industry in Saskatchewan has been devastated over the past few years by factors beyond farmers' control, such as drought and frost. Farmers are expected to pay 2004 expenses with 1972 incomes.

When other industries are devastated by factors outside their control, the government has been there to bail them out. The airline industry and the tourism industry in Toronto are perfect examples of this. Is it so unreasonable to expect that agriculture would benefit from similar assistance when it is racked by factors outside its control?

The Conservative Party has urged the government to drop the cash on deposit requirements for CAIS. This will free up a large amount of cash and do much to allow farmers to pay off their debts and purchase seed for a new crop year.

I urge the government to move quickly on a plan before the spring seeding. Do what is right to help save rural Saskatchewan.

* * *

[Translation]

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on February 13, in Edmunston, I had the opportunity to present eight Governor General's Fire Services Exemplary Service Medals on behalf of the Government of Canada.

During my visit to the Edmunston fire department, I presented the Governor General's medal to the following firefighters: Jacques Bérubé, Maurice Blanchette, Claude Campagna, André Grand-maison, Mario L'Italien, Léandre Michaud, Wilfrid Morin and Mario Rossignol.

I wish to acknowledge, here in this House, the invaluable contribution these firefighters make in ensuring the safety of our communities. I also want to congratulate the other firefighters from the Edmunston fire department who earned provincial or municipal recognition during the ceremony that I attended.

* * *

YVON LABELLE

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on the recommendation of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of

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Police, Yvon Labelle, a resident of my riding, was decorated with a second bar, a high police honour.

This was a well deserved tribute in recognition of 40 years of loyal service, 30 of which were in the city of Montreal at MUCPD, and 10 in Saint-Basile-le-Grand in the riding of Chambly—Borduas.

Throughout his career, Mr. Labelle managed various police teams and civilian employees. Under his charge they achieved noteworthy operational, administrative and community relations objectives.

In both cities, he established new methods for working with the community, bringing police officers and members of the public together thereby personalizing the role of the police in the community.

Congratulations to Mr. Labelle. The Bloc Québécois wishes him a happy retirement surrounded by his loved ones.

* * *

● (1405)

RAFIK HARIRI

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Rafik Hariri, Lebanon's former prime minister assassinated in a car bombing on Monday, had had a vision when he took office in 1992 of building a prosperous country from the ruins of civil war.

Despite the many setbacks, Hariri, remained in office for most of the past 12 years before quitting in October 2004.

Mr. Hariri's resignation came as Lebanon was in real need of his many international contacts to deal with a UN Security Council resolution demanding an end to Syria's military and political roles in Lebanon.

We are mourning the death of Mr. Hariri, the statesman. We also want to extend our deepest condolences to his family and, through them, to the people of Lebanon.

Yesterday, at the funeral, church bells were ringing while the Koran was read over the mosque's megaphones. This was a sign of unity in sadness. Indeed, Mr. Hariri was a symbol of unity.

* * *

[English]

SPORTS

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is time to play hardball with the government over the issue of men's softball.

Recently, a decision was made by the Canada Games Council to remove men's softball from the 2009 Canada Summer Games. Many constituents in Perth—Wellington and scores of sports fans across Canada are upset by this decision.

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On Friday of last week I brought this to the attention of the government to have the decision reversed. The government claims to be interested in increasing the numbers of Canadians involved in physical activity, yet Sport Canada seems to be uninterested in helping thousands of Canadians who are already very active in a sport they love. We already have the ball fields, teams, coaches and leagues in place. How much does it cost to run a tournament?

On behalf of softball players and fans across Canada, I respectfully ask for a straight answer. Do not throw me a changeup and I deserve better than a curveball.

* * *

HEART DISEASE

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, February is Heart Month in Canada, a time to make Canadians aware of the things they can do to manage their risk for heart disease and stroke. This includes maintaining a healthy weight, avoiding tobacco, following a healthy diet and being active.

Heart disease and stroke, the leading cause of death in Canada, costs the Canadian economy over \$18 billion annually, more than any other disease.

Today, representatives from the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Canadian Cardiovascular Society, the Canadian Council of Cardiovascular Nurses and the Ottawa Heart Institute are providing the "Heart Health Clinic" on the Hill, providing parliamentarians and staff with cholesterol and blood pressure testing, to help us assess our risk for heart disease and stroke. I encourage all members to drop by the clinic before 4 p.m. in the Wellington Building.

We need to do our part in our ridings by informing our constituents about the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle.

* * *

TSUNAMI RELIEF

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just as the Canadian public responded with unprecedented generosity to the tsunami disaster, so did Canada's health care industry.

The research based pharmaceutical companies, generic drug firms, and other health care companies donated the largest medical aid package ever to Health Partners International of Canada, a Canadian medical aid agency in Montreal.

With the grateful help of the Canadian Forces at CFB Trenton, \$7 million of medical supplies were shipped out on January 14 and accepted by the WHO in Sri Lanka. This shipment, affectionately known as "The Big One" has saved many lives. A further \$12 million will follow.

I would like to profoundly thank the Canadian people, especially those in Victoria, the five ministers involved, the pharmaceutical and health care companies, Health Partners International, and our Canadian Forces for their collaboration and speedy response. Together thousands of lives have been saved.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Indian residential schools dispute resolution plan has been a catastrophic failure, with \$125 million spent and less than \$1 million actually going to victim survivors. It is not meeting the goals of just and fair compensation. It is certainly not meeting the need for truth sharing, public education, and awareness that could finally lead to healing and reconciliation.

With the aging population, 50 former students are dying every week and justice will surely never come to them.

The Assembly of First Nations has tabled a resolutions plan which comprises two components: first, fair and reasonable compensation in an expedited process that includes recognition of loss of language and loss of culture; second, a truth sharing and reconciliation process, including the continuation of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

Today, February 17, is the deadline for Canada's response to the Assembly of First Nations plan. I call upon the government to end this shameful chapter in Canadian history and accept the proposals of the Assembly of First Nations.

* * *

● (1410)

CANADIAN FORCES

Mrs. Betty Hinton (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Monday, February 28 will mark the 14th anniversary of the liberation of Kuwait. Some 4,500 members of Canada's armed forces served in the Gulf War. Many came home with debilitating medical conditions and were subsequently released from the armed forces.

Little has been done in the last 14 years to address these medical conditions, other than slap a label of post-traumatic stress syndrome on them and cut them adrift. We often hear the word family used in connection with Canada's military. I can tell the House, this is no way to treat a family member. Not only have they been treated badly by their own country, they are not even allowed to accept a medal from Kuwait in appreciation for their service. This is just not right.

I would ask the government, in this Year of the Veteran, to act in the best interest of these veterans and not wait the usual 40 or 50 years to give them compensation packages. Make things right for these veterans now and give them the recognition that they have earned.

* * *

[*Translation*]

QUEBEC INTERNATIONAL PEEWEE HOCKEY TOURNAMENT

Mr. Christian Simard (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the 46th Quebec International Peeewee Hockey Tournament is underway from February 10 to 20 in Quebec City. The tournament's reputation is certainly well established, but it remains an important opportunity for our young hockey players to compete with players from more than 16 other countries, including a team from China.

Oral Questions

Approximately 2,300 players aged 11 and 12 years old compete in the international class B, C and AA events. This tournament has been gaining popularity ever since its beginning, in 1960. Today, nearly 200,000 people attend the various games over the 11 days of the tournament.

The Bloc Québécois wishes all participants a personal best in their performances and every success to the organizers of the world's top minor hockey tournament.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 21 years ago I lost my father to a massive heart attack. Today, heart attacks and strokes continue to be silent killers in every community.

Approximately 56% of Canadians do not meet the minimum recommended 30 minutes of daily physical activity. If they did, they would significantly reduce chronic diseases, such as heart disease.

Almost 50% of Canadians believe access to safe streets is also very important and 42% of Canadians support access to paths, trails and green space. A failing justice system is hurting our health. The need for affordable access to physical activity facilities and programs is a concern for 43% of Canadians.

Almost half of Canadians are obese or overweight, and 75% of Canadians believe government has a key role to play in promoting physical activity.

I am doing my share and I ask my colleagues to do the same.

* * *

[Translation]

CHILD CARE

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past few days, I have been hearing comments in this House that have me really concerned, because they seem to question the right of women to employment. If a person believes in employment equity, they must support the government in its efforts to establish a national child care program.

[English]

Canadians need a national system of early learning and child care to meet their demands and to help families set a foundation for lifelong learning, behaviour and health.

The Liberal government's policies are based on the facts, not some anachronistic "Leave it to Beaver" notion of family life promoted by the Conservative Party, or, as some people call them, the not ready for prime time players.

Cloaking traditional values in progressive language will not trick women and men into believing the 1950s fantasy of family life being peddled by the Conservatives. Maybe the leader of the official opposition should also vet the questions on this issue.

• (1415)

[Translation]

CENTRE UNIVERSITAIRE PME DU CENTRE-DU-QUÉBEC

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières recently took another step in the partnership between the education and business communities by inaugurating the new Centre universitaire PME du Centre-du-Québec.

This centre is an extension of the UQTR's research institute on small and medium size businesses, which has been actively involved in that sector for the past 25 years. From now on, entrepreneurs from the Centre-du-Québec region and part of the Montérégie and Estrie regions will be able to benefit from the expertise of this new centre, which is located in Drummondville's Maison de l'industrie.

The training activities offered by the centre are adapted to entrepreneurs' needs and realities, thus making the centre a meeting place for the concerns of thinkers and the down-to-earth approach of entrepreneurs.

Our businesses will benefit from the expertise of the UQTR's research institute on small and medium size businesses, since the mandate of the university centre includes providing such assistance.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, the Prime Minister stated, and I quote, "It is clear that if the Syrians are in Lebanon it is because it is necessary to keep the peace". This is an irresponsible and damaging statement.

How will the Prime Minister explain this new position?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is extremely important, particularly when it comes to foreign affairs, not to take remarks out of context. I clearly stated that Canada has supported the UN resolution and that Syria should withdraw from Lebanon.

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not what the Prime Minister said today.

[English]

The Prime Minister said that Syria was in Lebanon to keep the peace. Canada has supported UN Security Council resolution 1559, calling for Syria to withdraw from Lebanon. This is a shocking and irresponsible statement.

Given that the very presence of the Syrian army in Lebanon is an illegal threat to peace, how could the Prime Minister commit such a gaff so out of step with international opinion?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that was precisely my point. It was a terrible explosion that took the life of the former prime minister, a man I knew. We all extend condolences to his family, and to the Lebanese.

Oral Questions

Within the context of saying that this is certainly not the way one keeps the peace, the Syrians should retire and should withdraw from Lebanon. We support the United Nations resolution. Let there be no doubt about it. Let the hon. member not try to create confusion.

Hon. Stephen Harper (Calgary Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said this, and I will repeat it in English, "It is clear that if the Syrians are in Lebanon, it is because it is necessary to keep the peace". That is what the Prime Minister has said at the very time when our allies and the international community are focused on a possible Syrian role in the assassination of former Prime Minister Hariri.

Will the Prime Minister absolutely, unequivocally withdraw that statement and apologize for making it in the first place?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have said in French and I have said in English that the Syrians should withdraw from Lebanon. I have now said it three times. How many more times need I say it? I think it is a strange way to try to keep the peace, by allowing this kind of explosion to take place. The Syrians should withdraw from Lebanon.

Does the hon. member now understand the position of the Government of Canada?

[Translation]

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Syria is there to keep the peace.

[English]

That is what the Prime Minister said a little more than moments ago. Does he have any idea what he has done to Canadian credibility by standing here, just not that many moments ago, and saying that Syria is in Lebanon to keep the peace when every responsible thinking person and country in the world has said that it is not there to keep the peace? It is a threat.

Will he please retract that statement?

• (1420)

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, with great clarity, I expressed to both the Government of Lebanon and the Government of Syria, Canada's foreign policy, which the Prime Minister fully supports, as he just has done here in this House. Canada supports resolution 1559 calling for Syria to withdraw its troops from Lebanon.

[English]

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we are not questioning what the Minister of Foreign Affairs said last week. As a matter of fact, I listened to what he said and he was more or less on track.

It is the Prime Minister who has jumped the rails on this, who has taken the government right off track. Today, he stood in this building and said, "la Syrie est là pour garder la paix". What did he mean by that? Syria is there to keep the peace is what he said, when even the United Nations has said that Syria has to get out of Lebanon. It is threatening the peace in the Middle East. Today, the Prime Minister said that it is there to keep the peace.

Please explain it or retract it.

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are in a very important position right now, following the election of President Abbas of the Palestinian Authority, to make progress in the Middle East.

This Parliament should support this government when it is trying to play an activist role in the Middle East where we are promoting peace. What we did last week was indeed to express to the Syrian government and the Lebanese government that we believe they have a contribution to make in ceasing the violence and supporting Mr. Abbas who is emerging as—

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

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was very clear. The problem is not with him, it is with the Prime Minister.

I heard the Prime Minister's comments earlier. He stated his position both in French and in English. I should point out that he was just as confused in English as he was in French.

I would like the Prime Minister to explain to me what he meant when he said that the Syrians were there to keep the peace? What did he mean when he said that on television, less than a half hour ago?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I said that the Syrians claim to be there to keep the peace. This is a strange way to do so, considering that a bomb took the life of a former prime minister in a terrible explosion. This is what I said.

I will say it again: Canada's position and my position are that we supported the UN resolution. The Syrians should withdraw from Lebanon. It is obvious they are not able to keep the peace. They should withdraw. This is what I said and I am repeating it.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is repeating something he did not say. That is not what he said. I listened to him. He is the person who spoke on television earlier. And he was not talking to Gérard D. Laflaque, because this was during the news. He said very clearly that the Syrians were there to keep the peace. He did not say that the Syrians claimed they were there for that purpose. He is the one who said it.

I want the Prime Minister to explain something to me. How can he want the Syrians to withdraw if they are there to keep the peace? Let us hear his explanation about this confusion.

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member does not want to understand, that is his problem. What I said is that the Syrians say they are there to keep the peace. We saw that there can be no peace with an explosion such the one that occurred. That is what I said. The Syrians should withdraw. This is quite clear.

Oral Questions

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what is clear is that the Prime Minister is trying to correct the gaffe that he just made. This is what he is trying to do. He should at least have the decency to tell us that he made a mistake when speaking. It would not be the first time. But he should at least tell us that. He should tell us this is not what he meant. He said “the Syrians are there to keep the peace”. He did not say that the Syrians were there because they were claiming to want to keep the peace. He said “They are there”. I listened to the Prime Minister. Let him replay the tape. Perhaps he will understand himself, perhaps he will finally understand himself.

Will he retract and say that he misspoke? Let us hear him say that.

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what needs to be understood here is that our government has been extremely consistent and clear in its dealings with the Syrian and Lebanese governments. This was important when we did meet with them. We reiterated our support of Resolution 1559, which we have supported ever since it was passed by the UN Security Council. That is the Canadian government's position.

• (1425)

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs expresses that position very well. I understand his problem at this time: he has to try to redeem the Prime Minister, who got it all wrong. And that is what he has done.

If the Prime Minister has the slightest idea what his position is all about, would he tell us he made a mistake and that was not what he meant to say. Such things can happen, but let him at least have the decency to admit that he has misrepresented Canada's position and that was not what he wanted to say. Perhaps that would restore some of his credibility. Otherwise, he will just keep on making one gaffe after another.

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if I was misunderstood, then I was misunderstood. But I said, and say again: “If the Syrians are there to keep the peace, it is a strange way to try to keep the peace.” That is Canada's position, was my position yesterday, and is today as well.

[*English*]

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we just want to say to the Minister of Foreign Affairs that we support the kinds of things he was saying in the Middle East. We just wish his Prime Minister was supporting the kinds of things he was saying in the Middle East, instead of saying dumb things, then being even dumber and not retracting them. Instead of digging himself deeper, why does he not just get up and say that he misspoke and withdraw it?

The Speaker: I did not hear all that the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona said but I think one of the words sounded out of order to me if I heard it right. The hon. member is an experienced member. If he said something out of order, he will want to retract it.

Hon. Bill Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, anything I said I have heard said before and I never heard it ruled out of order. Some of the things the Prime Minister said about Syria should be ruled out of order and he should get up and retract those things.

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about a very important aspect of Canadian foreign

policy, one in which the government has been very clear and one in which I have been very clear.

If in speaking ironically about the fact that the Syrian's believe that they are there to maintain the peace and explosions of that kind occur, then that is not maintaining the peace. If hon. members have difficulty understanding that, then let me again repeat the Canadian government's position, the position that we have had from the very beginning. We support the United Nations resolution. Syria should withdraw from Lebanon.

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there have been a number of occasions on which the Prime Minister sent the Minister of Foreign Affairs in various incarnations outside to explain himself and to retract what he had to say, most of the time when he was saying the right thing.

Why does the Prime Minister not apply a little of his own discipline to himself, do what he often asks the Minister of Foreign Affairs to do when he says things that are contrary to government policy, and retract what he had to say about Syria being in Lebanon to keep the peace?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have explained the Canadian government's position today. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has explained it on a number of occasions. I really do not believe that on an important issue like this the opposition should play politics. If I was misunderstood, then I was misunderstood, and that is unfortunate, but I have now clarified it unequivocally.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC): No, Mr. Speaker, he was not misunderstood. He misspoke. What we are seeing here is a Prime Minister who is incapable of acknowledging an error and apologizing and retracting.

The Prime Minister made an enormous diplomatic faux pas when he effectively endorsed the illegal Syrian occupation of Lebanon. He insulted hundreds of thousands of Lebanese Canadians in the process.

Why will he not save face and correct the record by retracting that terribly irresponsible remark?

• (1430)

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was in the Middle East all last week and I want everyone to know that the Prime Minister supported me in my work in every one of the jurisdictions I visited. I spoke with the Prime Minister throughout that week and he expressed to me his satisfaction with the messages I was passing on. The Prime Minister and I are singing from exactly the same hymn book on this issue.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is becoming a walking embarrassment. He is the Prime Minister who found a democratic opposition in the Chinese parliament. Now he has found that the illegal Syrian occupation of Lebanon, which is an impediment and a threat to peace and may indeed be tied to the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri, is there to guard the peace.

[*Translation*]

It was “to keep the peace”, “pour garder la paix” as he just said in French.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Will the Prime Minister simply stand up and show a modicum of humility and retract?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have now heard the three opposition parties speak out very strongly in favour of positions that have been taken by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. We have now heard the three opposition parties speak highly of his work in the Middle East last week.

I just want to say to the three opposition parties that we on this side of the House are very proud of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. We are very proud of the work that he did last week. I want to thank the House for this acknowledgement of everything that he has done.

* * *

FINANCE

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder how proud the Minister of Foreign Affairs is of the Prime Minister. Not very, I would say.

This week it was foundations. In the past it has been rusty submarines, the HRDC boondoggle, the sponsorship disaster and the gift that keeps on taking, the long gun registry.

While government spending is up 40% since 1997, Canadians have seen their take home pay frozen for well over a decade. Canadians are not any better off than they were 12 years ago.

Will the government commit to slashing waste so that Canadians can keep more of their paycheques?

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, Canada has had an enviable fiscal and financial record in the last number of years. It has, over the last seven years in which we have run surpluses, paid down significant sums of debt, \$61 billion. The debt to GDP has been reduced to something in the order of 40%, interest rates are around 2.2% and inflation is within the band of 1% to 3%, all of which puts enormous sums of money back in the hands of Canadians where it is deserved.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is the difference between my party and the Liberal party. It is concerned about how well the bureaucracy is doing. My party is concerned about how well Canadians are doing.

It is time to show Canadians a little respect. They work really hard to look after themselves and their families and they really do not appreciate it when such a big chunk of their taxes goes to pay for the latest Liberal pipe dream.

Instead of hiding billions of dollars in foundations and buying Russian hot air or hiring thousands of people to register long guns in the firearms registry, when will the minister give Canadians—

The Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member seems to have a short term memory loss. He fails to appreciate that over the last five years we have had a \$100 billion in tax cuts. During that period of time all the thresholds have been raised and all the percentages have been

lowered. We now have, vis-à-vis the United States, something of a corporate tax advantage. All of that has been accomplished while paying down debt and lowering interest rates, all of which are significant accomplishments and possibly, just possibly, that is why Canadians re-elected this government.

* * *

*[Translation]***FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, the House of Commons voted down a bill separating International Trade from the Department of Foreign Affairs. However, yesterday, the Minister for International Trade confirmed that these two sectors would continue to operate independently of one another, even though the government did not obtain Parliament's consent.

Does the Prime Minister, who doubtless wrote the order-in-council, intend to upbraid his minister, whose shameful and irresponsible comments demonstrate an intolerable disregard for the decisions of this House?

● (1435)

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, my colleague, the Minister for International Trade is attending a federal-provincial conference on the very topic of international trade. I can assure the hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île that what my colleague was trying to say, as am I, is that, after the vote, we will continue to do our job promoting both the interests and values of Canadians in terms of international trade and foreign policy. We will continue to work in the best interests of Canadians.

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the malady of thinking one thing and saying another is catching. The minister's comments show a deep disregard for Parliament's decisions. The government must recognize that it made presumptions about the House's intentions and that it must now review the order-in-council dividing the department in two.

When will the members of this government finally understand that they cannot govern contrary to the decisions of this House?

[English]

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was very clear that Parliament did reject the parliamentary approach presented in the form of Bill C-31 and Bill C-32. The government is presently considering its parliamentary options and in due course will be presenting that parliamentary approach to Parliament.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Quebec Minister of the Environment is categorical about Kyoto. There is no way Quebec will pay the bill for provinces such as Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario. Thomas Mulcair also said that the bilateral agreement between Quebec and Ottawa ought to recognize Quebec's efforts in the past.

In order to save Quebecers from paying for other people's pollution, is the Minister of the Environment prepared to conclude a bilateral agreement that will recognize Quebec, because of its excellent record, as being much better placed than Ottawa to manage the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions on its territory?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, within our plan on greenhouse gas emissions in Canada, there will be bilateral agreements with each of the provinces, which will take each province's situation into account.

I will consider it a great pleasure to work with my Quebec counterpart to reach the best agreement for Quebec, as it will be to work with my counterpart from Alberta and my counterpart from Manitoba, and all together, we will make a national effort.

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we wonder what plan he is talking about in relation to the Kyoto Protocol, because the minister's plan is virtual.

The Minister of the Environment has finally admitted that Quebec, which has invested heavily in hydroelectricity, needs to make less of a pollution-reduction effort than provinces which produce more pollution.

After this first step, can the Minister of the Environment follow this reasoning to its conclusion and unconditionally apply polluter-pay principle, give up on 2010 as the point of departure and conclude a bilateral agreement that recognizes all of Quebec's efforts since 1990?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the opposition continues to suggest that there is no plan for Kyoto. There has been a plan since 2002. They need to read it, if they are not familiar with it.

I can report that one of the results of this plan is that, according to the International Energy Agency, Canada ranks third in the world in improving energy efficiency, ahead of a great many countries including the United States, Great Britain, Japan and others.

One reason we have achieved this is because of the 2002 plan, which has resulted in the economy's growing twice as fast as emissions. That is a start, and we shall go further.

[English]

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are starting to find out where large chunks of the government money that has been wasted on Kyoto has gone. This year, for example, \$26 million were spent on the one tonne challenge advertising and, of that amount, \$85,000 went to Mr. Rick Mercer.

Does the minister not think the money would have been better invested in Canadian technology? Why is the minister continuing to throw away money on Kyoto when he does not even have a plan?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the official opposition has no credibility whatsoever on this file since the leader of the party clearly said that he does not believe in Kyoto and that he does not believe it is human activity that is creating the greenhouse gases that are creating climate change.

They must be honest with Canadians and say that if they were in power they would give up and Canada would not do its share for the planet. It is what would happen if we did not have a great leader as our Prime Minister.

● (1440)

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Prime Minister, I was at the international environment conference in Buenos Aires. I listened to the countries, one after the other, get up and talk about Canada being a laggard for not having a Kyoto plan.

The Prime Minister now thinks he is a world leader. He is only a leader in his own mind.

Why will the Prime Minister not stop the photo ops, take some leadership and come up with a plan for Kyoto?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was with my colleague in Buenos Aires and he knows very well that Canada has been lobbied and lobbied to take the conference because the world regards Canada as a leader and they know that the Prime Minister of Canada cares about the environment. Thank God we do not have that party in power. It would be a disaster for the environment and a disaster for the planet.

* * *

CHILD CARE

Ms. Rona Ambrose (Edmonton—Spruce Grove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the current Liberal child care scheme, the money promised will only increase the number of regulated child care spaces from 7% to 10%. That does not even begin to scratch the surface of child care needs in this country. It would cost \$10 billion a year to fund this program for every child that needs it.

A plan that only helps some children, some parents and some communities is not fair. Could the minister explain how his plan will pay for the other \$9 billion this year needed for child care in this country?

Hon. Ken Dryden (Minister of Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, the government is committing \$5 billion over five years. That represents a 40% increase over what is spent on child care across the country.

The party opposite talks about a \$2,000 child tax deduction. It would be very interesting if anybody over there did the math. For a low income family that would represent \$320 a year. The average cost of child care in this country is \$8,000 a year.

Oral Questions

Ms. Rona Ambrose (Edmonton—Spruce Grove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my point is that \$5 billion is not enough. We need more options to be able to afford child care. There are also other ways to help Canadian families—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I am sure the hon. member for Edmonton—Spruce Grove appreciates all the advice she is receiving in asking her question, but we are entitled to hear what the hon. member has to say without the assistance. The hon. member for Edmonton—Spruce Grove has the floor. We will have a little order.

Ms. Rona Ambrose: Mr. Speaker, my point is that \$5 billion is not enough. We need more options to be able to afford child care.

There are also other ways to help Canadian families with young children. It is called tax relief. The Liberal tax system gouges families for every penny.

This child care program does not meet the needs of shift workers, part time workers and stay at home parents. Will the minister commit to giving parents who cannot use his system their tax money back so they can use it for other child care options?

Hon. Ken Dryden (Minister of Social Development, Lib.): As I said, Mr. Speaker, the plan over there is a \$2,000 child tax benefit. The end result of \$2,000 is \$320 a year for a low income family and \$320 a year is an embarrassment.

* * *

•(1445)

MARRIAGE

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the leader of the official opposition made a baffling statement about the issue of civil marriage. He suggested that Parliament could deny extending civil marriage without invoking the notwithstanding clause. He further implied the provinces could create civil unions for gays and lesbians and that the Supreme Court of Canada would probably endorse this separate but unequal model.

This issue deserves truth and clarity, not rhetoric. Could the hon. Minister of Justice please respond to the legal musings of the leader of the official opposition?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition suggested that the Supreme Court had not ruled—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: It did not sound to me as though it was directed to the Leader of the Opposition. I think he might have enjoyed the question but it appears to have been directed to the Minister of Justice. He has been asked for his legal views as Minister of Justice. We will hear the minister.

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition suggested that the Supreme Court did not rule on the question of same sex marriage. The Supreme Court in 2004 unanimously affirmed the constitutionality of extending civil marriage to gays and lesbians.

The Leader of the Opposition said that civil union was a compromise. The courts have said that civil union is a lesser form of equality.

The Leader of the Opposition said it is a matter of political discretion and not rights. The Supreme Court said it was clearly a matter of rights.

The Leader of the Opposition lives in a legal Disneyland where there is no charter, no rights—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Windsor West.

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TRANSPORT

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's dithering on the Kyoto plan is matched only by his dithering on the Canada-U.S. border and the Windsor gateway, where the Schwartz report, a unanimous recommendation by the city and the county to have a resolution for the gridlock in our community, to end the emissions and the pollution of poisons and to move traffic, is still sitting because the Prime Minister has his own mental gridlock.

I would ask the Prime Minister to quit his idling and keep his promise that he made to the citizens of Windsor and Essex County.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like the hon. member to know that we received the details of the Schwartz report only a few weeks ago. We look on it very favourably. We have scheduled meetings with the city and the Government of Ontario to ensure that this report will be implemented with regard to the parts that do not interfere with the work of the binational committee. We are well along in our examination of this report. And we are very proud of the report.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what I have learned in my time here is that when we raise a Prime Minister's promise he loses his tongue and has no voice. With that in mind, let me read a response that he gave to the *Windsor Star* in the election campaign. He said that "it's a question of...determining how the city wants to see us do it. This is not going to be imposed, that's an absolute guarantee".

This is not going to be imposed. We are still waiting for him to unlock his mental gridlock. We want to see the trucks removed from our streets and the economy functioning. More important, we want this Prime Minister to actually keep a promise this time.

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like the member to realize that we have already done some work, that we have money on the table, that the province is participating and that the city is working with us. I do not know where the member was, but the mayor is very happy with the work that is being done. Much more will be done together.

CHILD CARE

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are putting billions of dollars into a day care scheme, claiming it will provide 250,000 new child care spaces across Canada. Many parents are looking for these spaces simply because they cannot afford to raise their children at home or stay at home.

We believe that better stay at home options for parents would result in less demand for new spaces. How could the minister not agree?

• (1450)

Hon. Ken Dryden (Minister of Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat just a few numbers: \$5 billion over five years; a 40% increase to what is now spent on child care; and \$320 a year for low income families.

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently the Minister of Social Development confirmed that the Liberal day care scheme will not be free. Parents do not want to be forced to pay for institutional child care if they believe stay at home parenting is best for their family.

Parents want fair choices. Why is the minister going to compel parents to have others raise their children?

Hon. Ken Dryden (Minister of Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, real choice is the opportunity to have, as well as all of the other options that parents have, real child care, real quality early learning and child care. That is real choice. At \$320 a year, the plan over there is no choice at all.

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AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as reported last June, there are 24,000 Canadian deaths in hospitals each year from adverse events. Electronic patient records could prevent many of these deaths.

Canada Health Infoway received \$1.2 billion way back in 2001 to fund electronic records for all Canadians. The Auditor General wants to look at the books to see if Canadians are getting value for money.

What is this government hiding? Is she going to get the books?

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member does a disservice to the many services that these foundations provide when he misquotes the Auditor General.

What the Auditor General said yesterday was, "I'd just like to say, Mr. Chair, that we have no concerns about the financial audits that are being conducted in the foundations".

Those are the Auditor General's words.

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HEALTH

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was reported this week that for-profit health care is thriving in this country, not out west but in the Prime Minister's home province of

Oral Questions

Quebec, in fact within driving distance of his own riding. It is understandable that the Prime Minister would not know this, as he said he did not know anything about the millions of dollars being taken through the sponsorship scandal either.

While Alberta and B.C. are penalized for offering some private services, Quebec gets away with it right under the Prime Minister's nose. Is the Prime Minister really committed to eliminating for-profit health care in this country or just scoring some political points by bashing the west?

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this Prime Minister provided \$41 billion over the next 10 years, just last year, to all the provinces. I have said very clearly that the Canada Health Act is an important instrument for the federal government to ensure that there are certain practices that are followed across the country and certain principles that are observed. We shall be applying the Canada Health Act and enforcing it evenly right across the country.

* * *

[Translation]

BROADCASTING

Mr. Maka Kotto (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this morning, the union of CKAC employees decided to appeal the CRTC decision announced on January 21, which gave CKAC the go-ahead for its sale to Corus. Through this appeal, the union plans to ask the government to review the CRTC decision.

Now that the union has made an official request, does the Minister of Canadian Heritage plan to act on it?

[English]

Hon. Sarmite Bulte (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I can inform the House that today the parties have indicated that they will be appealing. However, no official documentation has yet been filed. They have until March 7 to file. At that time a decision will be made.

[Translation]

Mr. Maka Kotto (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the quality and diversity of news sources in the Montreal region are at stake here. The CRTC ruling will result in there being more English language newsrooms in Montreal than French ones. The minister has the power to intervene.

Will she then promise to act on the request by the CKAC employees' union and call on the CRTC to review its decision?

[English]

Hon. Sarmite Bulte (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to repeat for the House that we have received an indication an appeal will be filed. When that appeal is filed, the governor in council will review both parties' positions.

Oral Questions

●(1455)

INFORMATION SECURITY

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, doing business with the Government of Canada electronically may be hazardous to your health, your finances and your identity. The Auditor General is alarmed by the federal government's computer security, describing it as "a serious problem that needs to be fixed". She said, "I'm disappointed that the government still does not meet its own minimum standards for IT security..."

Why has the government failed to protect Canadians from this very real threat to their privacy?

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again the member mischaracterizes what the Auditor General said. It is true that we are under increasing attack all the time. If we note the graphs in her reports, she identifies the attacks the government is under. Thus far, we are successfully defending ourselves against them.

We have put in place the strongest secure facility on the Internet that exists; we built the gold standard and we are deploying it right now to all departments. This government takes the security of personal information very, very seriously.

* * *

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister appointed his friend and defeated Liberal candidate Glen Murray chair of the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy. Less than a year ago this same Prime Minister promised that he "would put an end to cronyism". Yet again the PM proves that, like his predecessor, he is firmly committed to Liberal Party cronyism.

When will the Prime Minister stop appointing people because of their close ties to the Liberal Party and start appointing people because of their ability?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development will have the opportunity to review the certificate of nomination of Mr. Murray. I think we would be very pleased to see just what part of his vitae the hon. member does not like. Is it because he has been mayor of one of the greatest cities of Canada? Is it because his background is in the Centre for Urban and Community Studies as a visiting scholar and urban policy coordinator at the University of Toronto? Is it because of his experience in urban planning and development and the environment, in both the private and the public sectors? The list goes on.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been two years since the SARS tragedy hit the city of Toronto. One of the criticisms made centred on the lack of coordination and communication with the World Health Organization, possibly exacerbating an already difficult situation.

[Translation]

In light of these concerns, what is the Government of Canada doing to remedy this?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of State (Public Health), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Public Health Agency of Canada continues to be actively involved with respect to public health threats. Its activities include emergency planning within the agency itself, and collaborative efforts with its various national and international partners, WHO among them.

[English]

Today the Public Health Agency is conducting a pandemic influenza table top exercise, Constant Vigil II. Tomorrow we will demonstrate our enhanced communication and interoperability with the two pillars of the agency, Ottawa and Winnipeg, the WHO, CDC Atlanta, BCCDC and l'Institut national du santé publique.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I also want to talk about something the Prime Minister said during the election. He said, "I believe it is very important for political leaders to keep their promises and whatever you say you are going to do, do".

JDS employee Tracy Mills has gone deep into debt just to pay taxes on a phantom income she never earned. The Prime Minister looked her in the eye and said that he would fix the problem. As far as the Minister of National Revenue is concerned, too bad, the file is closed, she gets nothing.

Is the Prime Minister going to fix the problem for Tracy as he promised? Is the Prime Minister going to do what he promised to do?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a very important case and I am determined to treat it with maximum fairness and flexibility within the law. That is why I am receiving daily reports on the matter. That is why we have a team dedicated to this matter.

In particular, I would like to express my gratitude to the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca who has provided me with excellent information and insight into the importance of this matter.

* * *

●(1500)

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Jeremy Harrison (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, an audit of the band council of the Labrador community of Natuashish has revealed that \$3 million of public money has gone missing.

The Indian affairs minister was informed months ago of alleged financial abuses of band money, yet the minister continues to do nothing.

We know that the government is incompetent but this is worse. This is wilful blindness to the theft of public money from the very people it is intended to help. When will the minister take some responsibility and have this matter investigated?

Points of Order

Hon. Andy Scott (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to clear the air on this issue.

I think it is very important not to use the kind of language that the hon. member is using. All federal funds, \$10 million last year, that went to Natuashish are accounted for. These funds are strictly controlled by KPMG, the third party manager, and that was supported by the audit by Gardner & Coombs of St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador.

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[Translation]

MIRABEL AIRPORT

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after expropriating Mirabel farmers' land, after doing all it could to close down Mirabel airport, now the federal government has made a unilateral decision to halve the taxes it pays to that municipality. The federal government has penalized the people of Mirabel enough. This arbitrary behaviour is unacceptable.

Does the federal government agree that the only right thing to do would be to return the property taxes to their previous level until the municipality's property assessment of the Mirabel facilities has been completed?

[English]

Hon. Walt Lastewka (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has been working with Mirabel and the people in the area and will continue to do so.

These items need investigation and it needs to be done carefully and not rush into decisions. Therefore we will continue to work with Mirabel and the surrounding areas.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Wajid Khan (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, experts believe that the deadly Asian bird flu is poised to trigger a global influenza pandemic. The World Health Organization is urging governments to start manufacturing and stockpiling vaccines to respond to this threat.

Will the Minister of Health tell the House what his department plans to do to answer the WHO's request?

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House that we are actually ahead of the pack on this very issue. Already we have purchased 16 million doses of the anti-viral that is required for this kind of pandemic.

The World Health Organization in fact has called Canada's pandemic flu plan a model for other countries and has said, "Canada is more prepared by far than any other country in the world for pandemic influenza".

The Speaker: I know that the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle was anxious to ask his question today. I know he missed yesterday too and I feel badly, but the time has expired. If we had

less yelling and applause during question period, we would get more in.

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POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a point of order arising from question period. The hon. member for Pickering—Ajax—Uxbridge asked a question of the Minister of Justice, which I believe was out of order, which had precisely nothing whatsoever to do, even ostensibly, with the administrative purview of the government.

I would draw your honour's attention to chapter 11, page 426 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, which states:

In summary, when recognized in Question Period, a Member should...seek information; ask a question that is within the administrative responsibility of the government or the individual Minister addressed.

Furthermore, a question should not be a statement, representation, argument or an expression of opinion—

I would submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that both today and on previous days in this sitting, that hon. member has posed questions seeking the opinion of members of the cabinet with respect to the statements of members of the opposition, which do not even pretend to constitute a question which would properly be put in order according to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*.

I would ask that your honour consider this matter, review the blues and perhaps be more judicious in permitting questions which clearly are out of order coming from government members.

• (1505)

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment. I sense a little sensitivity across the way. I am just wondering whether the hon. member took the time to make his point, which was I think rather a point of debate. In any event, when hon. members in the House ask questions of ministers, they often do so in contrasting what is being said in the House and at the same time ensuring that their questions are reflective of the administrative duties of ministers.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly expect that while you are reviewing this you will do so in a way that reflects your great judgment, as in the past.

The Speaker: I appreciate this merciless buttering up on the part of the government House leader, but I do not mind saying that I did listen to the question. It seems to me that the Minister of Justice does have administrative responsibility for the bill that is currently before the House dealing with the issue that he was asked about.

I know that the member for Calgary Southeast probably did not like the fact that the question was phrased in such a way as to ask the minister to comment specifically on arguments advanced by the Leader of the Opposition, and he, of course, was keen to answer the question himself, but it was not directed to him. As I said at the time, I could understand his enthusiasm.

Privilege

However, the question was asked of the Minister of Justice and it seems to me that it is within the administrative competence of the government to answer questions about legal matters concerning bills in Parliament, particularly the Minister of Justice.

I am having trouble finding anything on which I could hang a hat to support the argument of the member for Calgary Southeast that this question was out of order. I did consider the matter because there was a lot of yelling at the time suggesting that perhaps the question was out of order.

While it may have been unpopular, I am not sure that it is improper to ask the Minister of Justice about legal arguments concerning a bill before the House of Commons. For that reason, I allowed the question to proceed and the minister to give his answer, despite the enthusiasm of the Leader of the Opposition for answering the question.

I appreciate the good advice from the hon. member for Calgary Southeast as always, and of course I will bear his comments in mind in future. However, I think in this case the question was in order, but of course I am always glad to hear his argument.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say at the outset that I am sure you will take the opportunity, as my colleague requested, to review the blues and see specifically where the mention of Bill C-38 was in that question.

Would the government House leader care to indulge the members of the House of Commons and the general public and reveal what the government's agenda will be, the legislation before the House for the remainder of this week and into next week?

In addition, last week I asked him about the judges' remuneration bill, changes to the Judges Act, and he said that it would be forthcoming in due course. I just wonder if he has any further opinion on when due course will actually occur.

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to say that once again you have provided an outstanding judgment.

This afternoon we will continue with the NDP opposition motion.

Tomorrow we will begin with the motion standing in my name with regard to the Standing Orders. We will then proceed to report stage and third reading of Bill C-39, respecting the health accord. When this is complete, we will return to Bill C-38, which is the civil marriage bill. This will also be the business on Monday.

[Translation]

Tuesday will be an allotted day.

[English]

On Wednesday we will consider report stage and third reading of Bill C-33, the financial legislation; Bill C-8, the public service bill; Bill C-3, respecting the Coast Guard; and Bill S-17, respecting tax conventions.

At 4 p.m. on Wednesday the Minister of Finance will make his budget presentation. We shall take up the debate on the budget on Thursday.

As well, with respect to the hon. member's question, I would say to the hon. member that in the fullness of time we would have the Judges Act in the House. I will take every opportunity to ensure that House leaders are fully informed of when that legislation is to come to the House.

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of a question of privilege from the hon. House leader for the official opposition.

* * *

● (1510)

PRIVILEGE

INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege to charge the Minister of International Trade and the Minister of Foreign Affairs with contempt for misrepresenting and dismissing the role of this House.

As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, February 15, the House defeated Bill C-31, an act to establish the Department of International Trade and to make related amendments to certain acts. The House also defeated Bill C-32, an act to amend the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

Bill C-31 proposed to establish the Department of International Trade and Bill C-32 proposed to amend the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Act and other acts as a consequence of the proposal from Bill C-31 to establish the Department of International Trade. I use the word "proposed" because, as we know, until Parliament establishes or amends an act, the act is not established or amended.

The government or the two responsible ministers have dismissed the legislative process. The trade minister is quoted in the *Globe and Mail* as saying:

I was disappointed [the Conservatives] went against what they said they were going to do, but having said that, we are continuing to work head on.

The article also goes on to report:

Trade Minister...yesterday shrugged off the defeat of a bill that would create a new international trade department separate from the Department of Foreign Affairs, saying the two branches of government will continue to operate independently without Parliament's blessing.

The *Ottawa Citizen* reported the minister as saying:

We're not going to undo all the work we have done to become a functioning department.

The minister's comments show total disregard and disrespect for the role of the House. If the House is to function with authority and dignity, then it must be respected, especially by its own members, and particularly by the cabinet which is responsible to it.

While such disrespect is not new, the severity of this case is. Speakers have warned the government in the past for its dismissive view of Parliament.

Privilege

I am very certain that the government will rise, be unapologetic and claim that it has the authority to do what it is doing. However, that is not the point. Why would the government introduce legislation pretending that it matters when it does not? Then, when the outcome is not favourable to it, the government ignores the outcome. The government is making a mockery of Parliament. What is the public to think? The passage or defeat of bills does not matter. Parliament does not matter. Members of this House are irrelevant.

Is all that matters, what decisions are made in the PMO? What happened to the Prime Minister who wanted to end the practice of getting things done based on who one knew in the PMO? What happened to the Prime Minister who wanted to slay the democratic deficit? His ministers have just bankrupted democracy.

I would like to submit a ruling from October 10, 1989, on a similar matter. While it was a similar matter in comparison to the case I am presenting today, it was less offensive, I conclude. Notwithstanding, Speaker Fraser took it very seriously. The issue was regarding an advertisement put out by the government which made it appear, and I stress the word "appear", that the GST was approved by Parliament before Parliament actually approved it.

In the case of Bill C-31 and Bill C-32, there is no appearance. The government has already implemented the measures in Bill C-31 and Bill C-32. The bills have been defeated, and that outcome has been ignored.

Getting back to Speaker Fraser's ruling, the Speaker quoted the former member for Windsor West, the Right Hon. Herb Gray. Mr. Gray said:

When this advertisement—says in effect there will be a new tax on January 1, 1991,—the advertisement is intended to convey the idea that Parliament has acted on it because that is, I am sure, the ordinary understanding of Canadians about how a tax like this is finally adopted and comes into effect. That being the case, it is clearly a contempt of Parliament because it amounts to a misrepresentation of the role of this House.

As I mentioned, the case I am presenting to the Speaker today goes beyond appearance. If that is not offensive enough, the attitude of the Minister of International Trade and his intentions and the intentions of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to forge ahead are grounds enough for contempt. Where is the respect for the institution of Parliament? How can a minister of the Crown, who is responsible to the House, show such disregard and disrespect?

• (1515)

While the Speaker in 1989 did not rule a *prima facie* question of privilege, he did say this:

I want the House to understand very clearly that if your Speaker ever has to consider a situation like this again, the Chair will not be as generous.

I would argue that the situation I am presenting today is very much like the situation from 1989. The obvious difference is that it is far worse.

I do not understand why this sort of situation has not been addressed in the past. This government has a sordid past in these matters, and because the House has never dealt adequately with it, the government continues to make a mockery of Parliament. It has now gone to new heights and has taken it to a point where it can no longer be ignored.

To illustrate this point let me review some of the past disrespectful acts of the Liberal government.

On March 30, 1998, the minister of international trade sent out a press release announcing the establishment of a Canada-China interparliamentary group. At that time there was no Canada-China interparliamentary group.

The government named the head of the Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation before there was even legislation to set up the foundation.

There was another case presented to the Speaker on October 28, 1997, relating to the actions of the Department of Finance.

On February 3, 1998, I raised a question of privilege condemning the government for its dismissive views of Parliament on a matter regarding the Canadian Wheat Board.

These complaints resulted in many warnings from the Chair, Mr. Speaker. One of the warnings came from Speaker Parent on November 6, 1997. It was as strong as Speaker Fraser's warning and it went like this:

—the Chair acknowledges that this is a matter of potential importance since it touches the role of members as legislators, a role which should not be trivialized. It is from this perspective that the actions of the Department of Finance are of some concern....This dismissive view of the legislative process, repeated often enough, makes a mockery of our parliamentary conventions and practices....I trust that today's decision at this early stage of the 36th Parliament will not be forgotten by the minister and his officials and that the departments and agencies will be guided by it.

If a warning from the Speaker is to mean something, then the Speaker must be prepared to follow through with it. The Speaker's job is to ensure the House is given the opportunity to protect its authority and dignity.

I ask that you, Mr. Speaker, rule this matter to be a *prima facie* question of privilege at which time I will be prepared to move the appropriate motion.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on the same question of privilege. I thank the House leader for the opposition for raising this because the NDP has a similar sentiment.

These two bills were defeated by a democratic vote in the House a couple of days ago. Now we have read that the two ministers and departments in question are going to go ahead anyway. This completely disregards the vote held in the House, and it is a very serious question. Surely it gets to the fundamental premise of why we are here in this place.

There was point of order before you this morning, Mr. Speaker, about something that happened in committee, and about how things can become frustrating.

A vote in the House is a definitive act. The most basic thing we do in this place is vote on a bill either *yea* or *nay*. When those two bills were defeated, it was the voice of Parliament speaking. For the two ministers in question to basically thumb their noses at Parliament is a matter of contempt.

Supply

I would urge you, Mr. Speaker, to take this question seriously. This is a minority Parliament. This is a Parliament where we take our business very seriously in terms of working together and being constructive. We expect to see the kind of respect and the proper consequences as a result of a vote taken place in the House.

This is a serious matter. For the reasons I just gave, it should be reviewed by the Speaker, a decision made and followed up.

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure my hon. colleague, the House leader for the official opposition, was in question period when I said that the government was presently considering other parliamentary options to present to the House. Presently, both departments are working under the parliamentary sanction of the appropriations act.

More specific, I would draw to the hon. member's attention that in the 2004-05 main estimates, again the estimates voted by Parliament, there is specific moneys earmarked for the specific function of the two ministers and those two departments. The moneys were voted specifically for their function.

I would just draw the member's attention both on the general summary, item 10, for foreign affairs and international trade; foreign affairs, which is money appropriated for that purpose. Item 17 in the general summary, again, international trade, dollars were voted for by this Parliament specifically for the continued operation of those two departments.

I would not at any point in time want to suggest to the House, nor to my colleagues, that the defeat of both Bill C-31 and Bill C-32 are in any way being disregarded. They are not.

I clearly stated in question period that we were presently looking at other parliamentary options to bring back to this House. In the interim both departments are operating based on moneys appropriated by this Parliament and voted by this Parliament so both of those departments can continue to operate at this time.

• (1520)

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government House leader, from whom we just heard, I think underscored the problem that the House and Mr. Speaker faces.

Indeed, the day after this House deliberately rejected the government bill, which would give administrative effect to the estimates to which he refers, the government House leader was quoted in a *Canadian Press* article as saying, "The reorganization itself is ongoing. It will be a matter of the legislation catching". I think this would indicate what in criminal law is referred to as *mens rea*, an intent to ignore and go around the will of Parliament.

I would ask that Your Honour consider this statement in your ruling.

Hon. Tony Valeri: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member across the way might want to interpret whatever I say in any way he might like.

What I want to make perfectly clear is what I have said and essentially have referred to is that the departments will continue to operate based on the appropriations that have been voted to those departments from the main estimates in this House. Legislation and parliamentary options are being considered and to be presented back

to this House. That is exactly what I said. That is the basis with which those two departments can operate.

The Speaker: I do not know that I need to hear a lot more. We got the point. I think I will take the matter under—

Mr. Jay Hill: One last point, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The trouble is if I hear one more final point from the hon. member, I will hear another from the member for Vancouver East and then another from the government House leader. Is this necessary? Is this something new?

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, I want to make the point, if the member was listening carefully to my question of privilege, that at no point did I talk about the budgetary process or money set aside. I was referring to the total disregard and disrespect of the ministers and the government to a decision made by this House in a democratic vote.

The Speaker: I think we will bring this to an end. I have heard the arguments on both sides. I do not think anything new was added by what the opposition House leader just said. I think I got that message before.

I will review the transcripts of the arguments today. I will look at the statements of the ministers alleged to have been made by the member for Calgary Southeast and the opposition House leader. I will come back to the House in due course with a ruling on this matter.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1525)

[English]

SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—THE ENVIRONMENT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first I wish to inform you that I will be splitting my time with my distinguished colleague from Red Deer.

As the environment critic for the official opposition, he has considerable knowledge and experience in environmental matters, and a deep concern to see Canadians not only survive but flourish in the transition to the green economy.

I am Parliament's first auto worker by profession. I understand this industry in a way that is entirely unique. I understand by firsthand experience the human face of our decisions in Parliament. I know what it is like to live and work day after day, year after year, with the anxiety of job insecurity. I participated as a worker in helping DaimlerChrysler's Windsor assembly plant compete to secure product, not against other auto manufacturers but against its own sister assembly plant in St. Louis, Missouri.

Supply

I have survived the closure of the Pillette Road truck assembly plant. Sadly, several hundred of my brothers and sisters on the line are still on layoff, now going on nearly three years. I can tell everyone about the folks I left behind on the assembly line to come to Ottawa. I spend sleepless nights sometimes thinking about them. I see their faces, I know their families, and I take their future seriously. I vowed to fight for their jobs.

I think about the communities I serve, built with the tax dollars of auto workers. I think of the institutions that serve our communities, funded through agencies like the United Way, by the generous giving of auto workers. I think of the union members that work to build the community and preserve auto jobs, and how their political cousins in the NDP have ignored some of their most important advice on Kyoto. This motion before us today will hurt, not help, auto jobs and the communities they support in Canada.

The motion would regulate fuel efficiency improvements in all classes of light duty vehicles sold in Canada. I will give credit where credit is deserved. The fuel efficiency standard by weight class is a better standard than the Liberal government has been pursuing, a standard averaged across the fleet.

However, the motion before us today does not provide Canadians with the information they need to make a real informed choice on this matter. The NDP has left out a target, a timeline and a full accounting of all the costs. It is not just health costs that are talked about in this motion, but the costs of programs, industry costs, threats to jobs and the loss to community institutions if those high paying jobs leave our communities for foreign labour markets.

What the NDP should really tell Canadians is that it wants a 25% increase in fuel efficiency to make the 2010 averaging year under Kyoto. It hopes to achieve this without the U.S. and Mexico partnering in a common standard. It further hopes to achieve this while maintaining auto jobs and investing in a Canada that has lost virtually all of its comparative advantages against other global manufacturing jurisdictions, and without losing further market share to foreign auto manufacturers who have environmental cost comparative advantages on us. This is entirely unrealistic.

The NDP member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, who I have a lot of respect for and spoke earlier this morning in defence of this motion, said at the environment committee this week that in business he would never forget a target or timeline. It makes it impossible to get where one needs to go. In proposing the motion before us today, his party forgot both. We need a target and a timeline, but we need the right target and the right timeline.

The 25% fuel efficiency improvement by 2010 is a good target and timeline if we had started immediately in 1995. That is what Japan and the European Union did. It makes cost abatement for the industry easier and gave both Japan and Europe a comparative advantage against Canadian manufacturers in the move to a carbon constrained economy.

In all fairness, the NDP is not to blame for this. This is the fault of the Liberal government. It has dithered rather than delivered on significant tax measures and signals to industry and consumers to usher in the green economy. The Liberals have squandered five crucial years on negotiating a fuel efficiency standard to bring new

technologies into current vehicle production and allow automakers to spread out their costs to do this.

To remedy this deficiency, I recommend that the government add the five years it has squandered to the 2010 timeline for lost opportunities. The NDP motion insists on compounding Liberal mistakes with the great mistake of adhering to a 2010 average timeline instead of a 2015 timeline. Further, the NDP motion insists on 25% improvement without telling Canadians what it will cost them to get there.

● (1530)

I suspect when it comes to the auto industry and fuel efficiency regulations for Kyoto commitments, the NDP is afraid of taxpayer sticker shock. There are additional and more hidden costs: more jobs lost, lower tax revenues to all levels of government to fund social programs, more strain on programs like EI, and fewer charitable dollars for community programs.

With 180,000 Canadians, including tens of thousands in my communities employed in auto manufacturing and parts jobs, and a further 350,000 in related sectors from dealerships to financial services to transport, we cannot gamble with people's lives over implementing Kyoto. We must get it right.

A further deficiency in the NDP motion is that it ignores the North American integrated market. The motion proposes fuel efficiency regulations for vehicles sold in Canada. Only 20% of vehicles built in Canada are sold in Canada; 80% are sold to the U.S. and Mexico. Canada imports most of the vehicle supplies from the U.S., so the NDP motion, if adopted, is a pyrrhic victory for the slayers of climate change because if acted upon it will have a negligible impact on reducing greenhouse gas levels toward Kyoto commitments.

To make a real impact across the Canadian fleet, U.S. automakers would need to incorporate the same fuel efficiency standards for vehicle exports to Canada. With the Canadian market so small for vehicle sales, there is no prospect for the redesign and retooling costs to accommodate such a standard being recouped by U.S. automakers. If my NDP colleagues do not believe me, perhaps they will consider this from Buzz Hargrove. I call it a Buzz word of wisdom: "It's unrealistic to think that automakers will engineer unique vehicles just for the Canadian market—". The only other option is to restrict products to the Canadian market and consumers will not tolerate a lack of vehicle choice.

Supply

We already have tremendous disharmony with the United States, and Mexico too, on regulatory standards that hurt our competitiveness in attracting and retaining auto investment. Mexico has capitalized on this to become a serious export competitor to Canada by supplying U.S. markets. China will become the next serious export competitor. We need more regulatory harmony to keep and compete for auto jobs and investment in Canada.

Here is where the Liberal government has also failed the test. It has already squandered five years to negotiate a fuel efficiency standard to move new technologies into new vehicles. It has spent a marathon 21 days negotiating with Canadian auto manufacturers on a proposed fuel efficiency standard. Thankfully it has failed to deliver.

A sensible understanding of the integrated North American market means a fuel efficiency standard must be achieved commonly with the U.S. and Mexico. Sadly, the Liberal government has squandered so much credibility and clout with the U.S. President and congress by its toleration of anti-Americanism that it could not ensure the U.S. would join us in Kyoto to level the auto investment playing field.

I doubt whether it could bring them to the table to negotiate a common North American fuel efficiency standard that moves us to lower greenhouse gas emissions. Nevertheless, I recommend it does so immediately so our domestic producers can share Kyoto costs and reposition our North American market from slow integrators of environmental technologies to overcome the comparative disadvantage versus Japan in the EU in the move to a carbon-constrained economy.

Not only should the government add five years to the 2010 timeline for its slow start with domestic auto producers to bring technologies on stream, it must add the additional delay to negotiate a common North American fuel efficiency standard. It will be well worth it though when we move together to regain the global lead in auto technologies, and if the Liberal government cannot achieve it then the people will have to elect a Conservative government to get the job done right.

Our NDP colleagues across the way would do well to support collaboration with the U.S. and Mexico. Consider a further Buzz word of wisdom: "Our strategy for improving fuel efficiency must be implemented carefully and thoughtfully, with fuel efficiency standards set in concert with those of U.S. and Mexico". The motion before us today should have recognized this. It does not.

Finally, the NDP motion before us today fails to account for the fragile position of Canadian auto manufacturers in a globally competitive industry or the opportunities that their environmental regulation creates for foreign labour markets and automakers to seize our markets and end our jobs.

Global auto production has become fiercely competitive for a myriad of reasons. Automakers in Asia and Europe have gained considerable market share and the traditional big three employers are in a financially precarious position heading into the new green economy. Auto investment decisions that affect Canadian jobs and communities are made in Stuttgart, Germany; Dearborn, Michigan; and Tokyo, Japan, not in Canada.

● (1535)

In the past six years Canada's cost advantages have virtually disappeared. Kyoto means additional cost pressures to auto production in Canada from higher energy costs, higher costs for steel, plastics and chemicals because they come from energy intensive sectors, and increased costs for trucking vehicles to markets and parts to assembly.

The NDP motion today proposes that vehicles sold in Canada should incorporate technologies for higher fuel efficiency. While Toyota and Honda are at or within reach of incorporating these technologies, the big three manufacturers will face higher costs to comply which they fund from the sale of trucks, minivans and SUVs. While the NDP motion will—

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): Questions and comments.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if I understood the hon. member correctly, and I am sure that he would want to clarify it for the House, he suggested that somehow Canada was responsible for the United States not signing on to Kyoto.

The United States acts in its national interest. We act in our national interest. The United States did not sign the Ottawa convention. It did not sign the small arms treaty. It has not signed on with regard to International Criminal Court. The fact is it was not Canada's decision. Canada makes its own decisions and the United States makes its own decisions.

The member suggested somehow that we have not done anything. I want to again dispel in the House the notion that \$3.7 billion has been assigned. In fact, we talk about the \$250 million for the green municipal funds, the \$1.7 billion in terms of technology and innovation. We talk about public education. We talk about climate science, all of these things that are necessary in a broad approach.

When the member suggests that nothing has been done, a lot of things have been done in collaboration with various stakeholders across the country including cities and the provinces.

Even though the United States has not signed on, 42 states are moving toward Kyoto targets. Therefore, I would like him to clarify his suggestion that the Americans have done nothing and that it is our fault.

Mr. Jeff Watson: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member opposite does a lot of linguistic gymnastics. Let me clarify for the House. I said that the federal government has bungled the relationship with the United States and could not exert the proper influence to ensure that the United States would come on board with regard to Kyoto.

Supply

The Canadian government does not have the proper leadership, the clout or the ability to curry favour with the United States or Mexico in order to bring them into some discussions or negotiations on fuel efficiency standard that would be continental wide.

It is important that we have a continental wide standard. We do not have 42 states yet that have the standard. They may be moving toward it or looking at it or whatever, but we need to move in concert. That is what Buzz Hargrove has said.

It is reasonable to assume that if a continent that is out of step with Europe and Asia, and needs to compete with Europe and Asia to overcome a comparative disadvantage, that it do so in concert, and not segment the market further into chunks. We want a whole market, a whole standard that will allow us to not only compete but to overtake Europe and Asia in this regard.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Chair, I am disappointed the hon. member did not get to finish his speech. I was looking forward to the conclusion and summation.

The harmonization aspect that he is talking about is exactly what we are looking at. When we have California, New York, Maine, Washington and a number of other states starting to sign up, we start to look at 50% of the auto market. This is harmonization. Having George Bush at the table would not help us. It is not controlled at the federal level. It is controlled at the state level. This is what harmonization is about. This is the market that we are going toward.

Buzz Hargrove also supported our green auto policy. We are going outside the focus and mission of the motion that has been put forward by our party today which is the debate between mandatory, which we are suggesting and which the critic for the member's party has also agreed with, versus the optional system that the Liberals have been pushing for years without any results.

The question I have for my hon. colleague, for whom I have great esteem, is this. Is he in support of mandatory emissions standards? If so, why not support this motion? That is what it specifically calls for.

• (1540)

Mr. Jeff Watson: Madam Speaker, the direction with respect to my comments, very clearly, has been to indicate that this is not simply a debate with no context. The motion does have some context. The party opposite has a position with respect to what the fuel efficiency standards should be and what the timelines should be. Those are important things to consider, but whether they are workable and realistic is something else. The motion, however, does not go into any of those details.

Furthermore, I think some details would have been pertinent to pushing the government in the direction in which it needs to go because it has really bungled this. A lot of time has been lost and it could have delivered something. Time is ticking away. We need to have specifics, not abstract debates.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to speak to the motion today and to clarify something for the NDP critic.

I appreciate the motion today but I have one problem with the word "mandatory". I do not feel that mandatory demonstrates a cooperative approach, the approach we have to use if we want to

achieve this kind of work with our industries and with Canadians. What we are lacking is a long term plan and a vision.

Members on the other side have talked about how much the government has done and what a wonderful record it has in terms of the environment. We need to continually remind them what the environment commissioner said in her last six reports, that the government talks a lot but accomplishes very little.

We need to remind them that when the OECD looked at 24 of the top industrialized countries it said that Canada rated at the very bottom, that it was 24 out of 24.

We need to remind them that there are over 300 boil water warnings at any given time in Canada. Who would have thought that Canada, that pristine, clean place that many of our international friends think we have, would have 300 boil water warnings? One might attribute that to some poorly developed countries, but not to Canada.

Cities are dumping raw sewage into the oceans. Landfills are spewing waste which is entering into aquifers and spreading into our waters. We have brownfields in every city and about 50,000 contaminated sites in Canada.

We have a Kyoto plan to which we have committed to 6% below 1990 levels. The member mentioned that we have committed \$3.7 billion. Let us examine that \$3.7 billion. Canada committed to 6% below 1990 levels. By 2000 we were 20% above 1990 levels and today we are 30% above. That \$3.7 billion went down the drain with nothing to show for it. If that is accomplishment in the eyes of the Liberals, then they are the only ones thinking that way.

The big problem with this whole environmental issue is that the government does not have a plan nor does it have a vision. It does not know how to deal with water or the whole issue of air pollution. A major battle is going on between NRCan and environment. They are more interested in protecting their turf and fighting with each other than they are with accomplishing anything. I hope that will change soon and that we will be the ones to do that.

An important point to mention to our NDP friends is that cooperation rather than confrontation will get them a lot further. Industry knows it is good to be green. Industry understands what that means. It is good for business. All of the ads for Ford, DaimlerChrysler, GM and Toyota talk about being green. It should not be a big stretch to sit down and work with them and show them a vision.

As my colleague mentioned, had this been done in 1992 when climate change was first identified as a problem, we would be a lot further down the track than we are here in the last weeks of Kyoto trying to accomplish something. Those guys just do not know where they are going, and that is the most important point.

What has been mentioned in today's debate is that this is a global market. No longer are we isolated into planning for one country. We cannot isolate ourselves from our number one trading partner. There are \$1.4 billion a day crossing the border. Like it or not, that is the reality of Canada. One in four jobs, and in some places higher than that, depend on that. We work in a cooperative manner to accomplish something, and that is what this is all about.

Supply

• (1545)

I was working on the Sumas 2 project in the Fraser Valley, looking at the building of a power plant right on the B.C.-Washington border. After spending time in that community I realized just how bad the pollution was. That is the second most polluted smog belt in Canada. The first is in southern Ontario, which I have visited as well. We realize that Canadians want us to deal with the smog and pollution problem. It is only common sense.

We have higher incidences of asthma and other health problems associated with pollution. Industry understands that. People understand that. The only ones who do not seem to understand are the government members across the way. Instead, they sign an international agreement with targets that they have no idea how they might achieve. Their solution will be to send the money offshore, buy that hot air wherever they can find it, instead of dealing with the technological solutions that we could find here in Canada.

I really believe Canadians want us to deal with the smog problem, the smog days in Toronto, in Ottawa and in the Fraser Valley, which is caused by sulphur dioxide, nitrous oxide, particulate matter and surface ozone.

What is the government doing? The government is attacking carbon dioxide. The government is thinking about, believe it or not, making CO₂ a toxic substance and regulating it under CEPA.

CO₂ is a plant food. CO₂ is what we give off as animals. CO₂ is what one pumps into a greenhouse to get more plant growth.

Technology is moving quickly. There is the sequestering of CO₂. I saw a situation where a plant in Denmark was capturing the CO₂, gasifying the CO₂ and selling it in tanks to greenhouses to pump into the greenhouses. It was also being sent to Norway to pump down oil wells to increase the removal of oil and gas by 30%.

What are we doing in Canada? We are using water, pure clean water and pumping it down wells.

There are so many things that the government could show some leadership in and yet it is basically doing nothing. We are signing an international agreement and we have no plan. We are going to send the money off and companies that would have liked to have cooperated on a plan will not be able to. They will be deprived of that money for research and development and all of those good things on which we could become leaders.

What is the government occupied with now? Again, we have the players of Environment Canada and NRCan having a battle over whether it is a poison or not. I do not know, but I know my background in biology would certainly have a difficult time finding CO₂ to be classified as a poison by anyone. Anyone who understands photosynthesis would know how important CO₂ is to life.

We need to move forward technologically. We need to look at hybrid vehicles. We need to look at fleet vehicles, using natural gas, using various forms of hybrids or using propane.

The government could be doing so many things but what is it preoccupied with? It is going to force the auto industry into some kind of regulations that in fact will handicap them. The end result

will be auto jobs here in Ontario will be lost. There is no other answer to that.

• (1550)

If the government had sat down with the auto industry 10 years ago and told the industry what had to be done, told the industry what happened in Rio and what was in the Kyoto accord, then maybe together they could have come up with a solution. Instead, it holds a hammer over the industry's head, the hammer of mandatory regulations, with no help and no other solutions. That is just not the way to go. We have learned that and we have seen that.

Companies do have an option. They have the option to leave Canada, to leave Ontario where those jobs are.

I could take a lot longer to elaborate on the environmental hazards of what the government is doing.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to take issue with my colleague from Alberta because he criticized some of the comments our environment critic made with regard to his support on the mandatory regulation of standards.

Elizabeth May, the executive director of the Sierra Club, in reference to a survey done over the course of the last election, to which that member responded, said that one of the biggest surprises they had was his commitment to regulate fuel economy and "abandoning the voluntary approach".

During the same period of time, five days before the last election, Simon Tuck and Greg Keenan from the *Globe and Mail* said that the Conservatives "were abandoning the voluntary approach with regard to fuel economy and emissions and were going to the mandatory".

I wonder if he could tell us, in terms of his opening comments to our environment critic this afternoon, what his position is. Is he in favour of mandatory or is he opposed to it?

Mr. Bob Mills: Madam Speaker, I sort of feel like the Prime Minister today. He gets quoted and all those things.

We sit down with the industry and we take the fuels. What we were talking about were fuel cells, the hybrid vehicles and what the auto industry could do. For instance, when we go up a hill we use six cylinders, when we go down a hill we use two cylinders. If we were to ask the industry to put regulations on those kinds of things, I am sure, if they are intelligent regulations that will make the industry competitive wherever it went, then the industry would agree to them.

The whole idea is to work with the companies, put the regulations in which then keeps out foreign competitors who will not agree to those kind of things. Those are the kind of off the shelf technologies that, yes, we can regulate and we can control.

Those members can imply that is massive regulation that would put all Canadian businesses out of business, which is probably what they would do, but how do they equate that with their union buddies when they talk about throwing these regulations on and having that industry leave the country? How do they stand in front of auto workers and tell them that sort of thing?

We must work with them and put in those kinds of regulations with which they agree.

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Hon. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, with respect to my colleague's remarks, I suspect that anything can be a poison if it is taken at the wrong time, in the wrong place or in the wrong quantity. However he is talking about smog.

I am the member for Peterborough which is downwind of the general Toronto area. Many years ago, smog was a phenomenon of downtown Toronto. It no longer is. The air in downtown Toronto is quite clean. It moved out to the suburbs and for quite a long time there was smog in the suburbs. However, today in Ontario, where I live, on several occasions the peak smog, the peak pollution has been in Peterborough and villages like Omemee and Lakefield, places which perhaps my colleague does not know. These are tiny rural communities. One of the reasons for that is that we are downwind of Highway 401. Ground level ozone, which he mentioned and which he knows is a poison, now develops around our lakes where we have cottages and things of this type.

I know he is tied to the oil industry, but would it not be better environmentally and better economically for the oil industry, which he so well represents, to use oil as a base in the petrochemical industry rather than simply burning it and polluting the environment?

• (1555)

Mr. Bob Mills: Madam Speaker, in reality maybe I understand a little what it is like to be a Quebecker and how people sometimes trash them. It is a little bit like that being an Albertan; just because a person is an Albertan, somehow he or she is hooked to the oil industry. I have never worked for that industry. I have never had anything to do with it. I have no connections with it, so I really do not know what the member is talking about. That is the problem; people just assume things.

The reality is, I believe, that the future of technology is fantastic. Whether it is wind, whether it is solar, or whether it is geothermal, biomass and ultimately hydrogen, that is where we have to end up. When we do that, we will preserve the oil and gas industry by doing value added things with it, such as pharmaceuticals, fertilizers and petrochemicals of various kinds. That is where the oil industry's future is, certainly not burning it in cars.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley very much for bringing forward today's motion, which is very important not only for today's society but for our children's future.

I keep hearing from other sides of the House about the cost. What is the cost of all of this? The cost right now is 16,000 lives in this country every year. The cost is hundreds of millions of dollars in medical treatments for people with asthma, breathing problems and lung problems. There are two words that come to mind which as a kid growing up I had never heard of. One is Pulmicort and the other is Symbicort. I use Symbicort now. It is a puffer, an inhaler used by people with bronchial or asthmatic problems. My daughter has one as well.

I do not recollect seeing very many children with heavy breathing problems when I was attending school. There may have been one or two in the whole school with asthma and who required specific medical attention, but it was very rare. Many children now have breathing problems. Today's motion will not cure it all, but it will go a long way in clearing the air for many generations down the road.

The cost of not doing something is death. That is what will happen if we sit idle in the House and expel more hot air at each other, if we sit on our hands and say we cannot do anything because of all of these other factors. The debate is over now. It is time we took the bull by the horns and worked with everyone to get this thing done.

I was very pleased to attend a conference which the hon. member for Red Deer held a few months ago with a congresswoman from California. She told us how she had fought for years in the halls of the California legislature in order to get mandatory legislation on car emissions in that state to be the best and strictest in North America. Eventually she won her argument.

She came to Canada and the hon. member for Red Deer, a member of the official opposition, invited us to a presentation she was making. I had assumed by that invitation to see her that quite possibly the hon. member for Red Deer was interested in what she was saying, having no idea that members of his own party would say that what she was saying really had no merit at all. If that woman could pursue that and have the state of California accept the toughest emission controls in North America, we in Canada should be able to follow suit fairly quickly.

I am very proud to be a member of the New Democratic Party which has worked with labour, industry and environmental groups to develop a green car strategy, and which we released prior to the last election. It is a successful program. New Democrats had this idea. It is free. The government can take it and run with it. We know it is a success. We know it will create jobs now and in the future. We think this is the way to go.

I am rather concerned about the Conservatives always switching the debate over to the government's lack of responsibility on what it has done on things like Kyoto. I want to remind the Conservatives that everything they were against before, they now seem to support. In the flag debate 40 years ago, the Conservatives voted against the new flag. They voted against medicare. They vote against everything that members in the NDP have pushed for and which Canadians wish to have.

Tommy Douglas was hung in effigy when he brought in medicare in Saskatchewan. He has been inducted into the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame. When Ed Schreyer brought public auto insurance to Manitoba, people screamed and yelled and said that it could not be done, that it was against their rights. Now Manitobans love public auto insurance.

Supply

● (1600)

Today in debate the Conservatives said that they were concerned about day care, that they did not like public day care and that the money should be given to the parents. They are right in that regard. Parents should have more money in order to make the choices they want. Then they said that \$5 billion was not enough for day care. We in the NDP are really stymied as to exactly where they stand.

If and when day care gets in, which cannot happen fast enough for members of the NDP, I can guarantee that 20 years from now, Conservatives, if there are any left in this land, will stand up and defend day care. I can just see it again.

There is one other thing. The Conservatives talk about a free vote on the issue of same sex marriage. They blame the Liberals for not allowing a free vote for members of cabinet. I remind them that Mr. Mulroney, during the abortion debate, ordered his cabinet to vote a certain way and allowed the backbenchers to vote freely. It is amazing how quickly the Conservatives can forget their own history and move on to other issues.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have listened to the member, for whom I usually have a great deal of respect, and his speech has nothing to do with the motion. He has talked about same sex marriage. He seems to be obsessed with that. He has talked about free votes. He has talked about everything except the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): I think the member is moving toward the relevancy of his argument.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: That is absolutely correct, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the comments of the hon. member, who did not want to stick around to hear that.

We are talking about a very serious issue of mandatory regulations on auto emissions. We have said it should be 25%. It could probably be a lot higher, but we have said it should be 25%. We did not put a date on it because we want the government to make it mandatory and tell the industry what the target is and ask industry when conceivably it can be done and ask industry what it needs in order to do it. That is the whole essence of the motion.

We encourage the Conservatives to vote for the motion. If they are against the Liberals on all the other arguments, that is fine, but they should vote with us on this one. They should show once and for all that they truly are against the Liberals on this one. The reality is that their own environment critic indicated support for mandatory controls. He said it twice. Are they now saying that the Conservative Party's environment critic was wrong prior to the election? Was it an election ploy maybe? The fact is he said it not once, but twice. We only assume that somebody in the shadow cabinet would be able to speak clearly on whether something is mandatory or voluntary.

When it comes to the government, we would not have to have this debate today if the Liberals themselves, when they became the government in 1993, realized the escalating problem of air pollution and smog in this country. There is no excuse in the world for 12 years of dithering on this file and many other files. The reality is that we have been promised and assured that the health of Canadians is a number one priority.

The other day my colleague from Elmwood—Transcona said very clearly that emissions have raised by 20% in this country. They are not 20% lower. That is disastrous. Our children are breathing in this stuff. They are getting sicker because of it. Because of this health care costs are increasing and increasing. We can either pay now and do the right thing and bring in mandatory 25% emission reductions, or we can dither and do nothing and spend all that extra money on funerals, on medical problems and everything else that happens when we do not pay attention to our natural environment.

This particular initiative has great support from many environment groups throughout the country. We know that many within labour support this initiative as well.

We are asking the government for leadership on this file. We are asking that our colleagues in the government and our other colleagues in the House support this motion. If we leave anything for our children, it should be cleaner air, cleaner water, and a cleaner planet for many years to come.

● (1605)

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as always, I appreciate the comments of my colleague from the New Democratic Party. I want to make it very clear to my colleague that the government is in ongoing negotiations with the automobile industry. We are working toward a voluntary agreement which will be good for the environment and good for the economy. If we fail to get a voluntary agreement, we will have to look at other options including regulatory options. However, the government is committed to deal with emission reductions, not only to 2010 but well beyond 2010.

I know the member appreciates the importance of the automobile industry in Canada. I would like him to note the fact that the government has worked very closely with the automobile industry, including the establishment of a national automobile strategy, and we have dealt with a motor vehicle fuel concentration program.

The hon. member is a good listener. Unfortunately, his colleagues are not.

The hon. member talked about maybe 25% or beyond. Could he tell us what technology he believes is currently available or in the pipe that would take us well beyond 25%, realizing the importance of the auto industry and jobs to people who support political parties in the country and who need the jobs?

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Madam Speaker, with the great respect I have for the hon. member, I am amazed that was able to say all that with a straight face. The Liberal strategy on the auto sector is absolutely an oxymoron, if I ever heard one. It is incredible.

I have a simple question for him. We know from history that every time the automobile sector is asked to do something voluntarily it fights it tooth and nail. It fought tooth and nail against the air bags. It fought tooth and nail against seat belts. Anything that meant added costs, it did not want it. Now the automobile sector is a proud proponent of these.

The technology exists. We have hybrid cars, we have smart cars, we have the industry and we have the will. We just need leadership from the government to make it happen. The member says that he wants to be very clear. That is what we want. We want a clear environment, no smog, so we can all breathe free and easy in the years to come.

• (1610)

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Madam Speaker, our colleague from Ontario was commenting on how we would proceed to go beyond the 25%. All we want to see at this point in time is the government to start getting to 25%.

Manitoba has been very much an advocate and proactive in reducing emissions, such as helping to install 4,000 geothermal heating units in private homes, converting generating stations from coal to natural gas, including putting ethanol in fuel to help reduce emissions. A lot can be done.

Are there other aspects along those lines in Manitoba and other provinces that can be done to at least get something started and to give the Liberals an idea where to start because they do not seem to know how to do that.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Madam Speaker, my colleague comes from the great province of Manitoba which is showing leadership in the area of the environment. Manitoba shows leadership in many other areas, but when it comes to the environment, Gary Doer and the NDP government of Manitoba show great leadership.

Like Quebec has done on day care, Manitoba has done on the environment. What they both have is leadership on a particular file. If the Liberals do not have a plan and have no ideas, all they have to do is pick up the phone and call Gary Doer. I am sure he would have lunch with them, in a beautiful Winnipeg restaurant, and would be able to straighten it out for them.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, my thanks to my colleague from Sackville—Eastern Shore for generously sharing his time with me and for his kind comments about the province of Manitoba. We take the issue of climate change very seriously.

Yesterday, the first day of the implementation of the Kyoto accord, should have been cause for great celebration in the land. I am surprised there were no people dancing in the streets. We would like to think this was the first day on the road toward a cleaner, healthier environment. The reason we have not seen cross-country jubilation and celebrations in the streets is no one has given the general public any indication that there is a plan in place which may lead to improving the quality of our air and therefore the quality of our life. There is an absolute dearth, a paucity, an absence of any concrete plan whatsoever.

I would like to table today something for the Liberal Party. If the Liberal government is devoid of any plan or any idea on how to achieve the Kyoto goals, the NDP has a concrete plan. We are willing to share that with the government of the day. It is even costed out clause by clause. I will be happy to go through some of that should time permit.

The Liberal government is not even at kindergarten level in terms of how we might achieve our Kyoto goals. The Liberal government

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is being out-greened by a guy who drives a Hummer. Arnold Schwarzenegger, the Governor of California, is light years ahead of the Government of Canada. The Prime Minister of Canada is out-greened by a guy who drives a Hummer. This is shocking to me.

California has taken seriously the fact that voluntary compliance for reduction of emissions will not work, which essentially is the content of our motion today. If we are waiting for the air to clean up through voluntary compliance or voluntary measures, we had better pack a lunch and a puffer because we will be wheezing like my colleague from Sackville—Eastern Shore, complications that we do not wish on anyone.

Our excitement about the advent of the Kyoto accord is tempered greatly by the fact that we do not see a plan on the part of the government to help us get there. We do not have a road map to get to where we need to go. We have soiled our nests so badly that our kids cannot breathe, and it can only get worse unless we take drastic measures. I do not accept that what we are proposing is drastic at all. We believe it is reasonable, achievable, cost effective and necessary.

Our motion simply states:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should recognize the public health impacts of smog and the failure of voluntary emission standards by legislating mandatory improvements to vehicle efficiency in all classes of light duty vehicles sold in Canada.

This is not rocket science. The industry and Canadians should have been going in this direction all along.

There has been reluctance in the industry to accept regulation. It is not in its nature to willingly accept limitations on how it conducts business. However, there is a duty and an obligation on the part of government to ensure that businesses act in the best interests of Canadians. I remind members that voluntary compliance to ethical guidelines in the accounting industry is what gave us Enron and Nortel, et cetera, until the government in the United States swept in and introduced strict regulatory measures.

In this example there is perhaps something even more important at stake, and that is the air that we breathe. What could be more important and what could be more natural than the government to intervene on behalf of the well-being of all Canadians? If some people are unwilling to accept that we should do these measures for the right reasons, then they can look at the monetary reasons.

Canada's Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development has calculated that the benefits, when compiled about achieving air quality standards contemplated in Kyoto, would be valued at \$10 billion annually. That is a \$10 billion net benefit for doing the right thing and making our air safe to breathe. Do we need any more arguments about why we should take steps now? There are secondary impacts that are not even usually factored into the equation of air quality.

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• (1615)

Research shows that in the greater Vancouver regional district, improving the quality of air would prevent \$74 million a year in crop damage. That is something we do not consider. As we soil our nest and pollute our environment, it has an effect not only on the air we breath for human consumption, but the residue hurts agriculture and that industry sector. The B.C. Medical Association estimates that 2,000 premature deaths per year in B.C. are the result of air pollution. I will not bore the House with those statistics because shocking as they are, I think we are all quite aware of them. That is only one province alone.

There has been a pattern of reluctance of the industry to even implement research and developments to the auto industry without regulation. There was opposition to even publication of car-gas mileage in the early years. In 1975 the American Environmental Protection Agency wanted car companies to start listing what mileage one could expect from the cars they were selling. They balked at that. They did not want to do it because they thought it would interfere with their ability to market certain models of cars. Now, after a threat of action from the EPA, car companies stamp right on every product what mileage one can expect from X, Y and Z car. This has been a net benefit. It now becomes a marketing advantage for companies to brag that their vehicles achieve X, Y and Z kilometres per litre.

The Environmental Protection Agency met with car companies to try to implement reduction of smog causing tailpipe emissions. The industry was not crazy about it. Some even claimed that such a rapid change would lead to bankruptcy. Some of the big three car companies said that if they had to reduce tailpipe emissions, it would be the road to bankruptcy. That was not the case. Now Ford and other companies claim that they go beyond regulatory requirements and that is part of their marketing strategy as well, to promote what they make.

We argue that there will be no negative impact on the industry if we raise the bar and expect a higher standard of fuel efficiency. In fact, the industry will rise to those new expectations, meet them and we will all benefit from that.

We have a number of points that we put forward in a comprehensive package on how Canada would meet its Kyoto obligations. As I alluded to earlier, I am glad to share these good ideas with all Canadians, and specifically with the ruling party of the day. We not only have the ideas, through consultation and canvassing right across the country, but we costed them out. We did an analysis as to what the impact would be on jobs. I am happy to report that there are far greater job creation possibilities in the demand side management of our energy resources than there is in the supply side of natural resources. We should all take note of this.

I used to work on the oil rigs and it does not take very many people to produce a barrel of oil. Once the well is pumping, there are very few people involved at all. However, it takes a lot of person hours to energy retrofit a building envelope to save energy.

As we clean up the environment, we will be creating jobs. This will be jobs and the environment, not jobs versus the environment.

This is something to celebrate as we implement these things on our way to Kyoto.

Yesterday is a day we are celebrating, the first day in the survival of the planet. Let us put a road map in place. Let us implement motions like this and clean up together for a better world.

• (1620)

Hon. Keith Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to compliment the member from the NDP for this motion. I think it is an excellent motion that speaks to a challenge we are all facing.

I will just ask him to be perhaps a little patient. As the parliamentary secretary for the minister said very clearly in his comments, currently we are engaging in negotiations with the auto industry. They are at a sensitive time right now, but I hope that he will be pleased in the near future with what will come out of those deliberations. I know that the minister, the parliamentary secretary and the government are working very hard to resolve this conundrum.

Let me just say we know that the transportation industry is the fastest growing industry. It is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. The interesting thing is that the technologies to actually implement this change already exist today. If we look at the experiences of Europe, California and Japan, we see that they have done an excellent job in reducing those emissions, not based on technologies that we hope we have but on technologies that we have today. Interestingly enough, that does not include the very expensive hybrid cars we have now, which is a good move. We can actually accomplish the 25% goal with what we have, without hybrids, and I am sure that in the future hybrids will become more popular.

My question to the hon. member is this. With respect to a Kyoto plan, a significant but under-reported and unrecognized element of what ought to be a part of that plan is not so much how much we burn. It is one factor, but there is another way in which we can actually meet our Kyoto requirements and indeed go beyond them, and that is in the area of conservation. In other words, we burn fuel and we emit energy, but how do we manage to conserve that energy, which obviously affects the amount of carbon materials and fuel products we burn?

Is the hon. member aware of and does he support the notion that we should adopt better ways of conserving energy through the way in which we build and insulate our homes and buildings? Does he agree that this is a significant way in which we can meet our Kyoto requirements?

• (1625)

Mr. Pat Martin: Madam Speaker, the motion we are debating today deals specifically with the mandatory emissions standards for the auto industry, but my colleague from B.C. is absolutely correct in that on the demand side management of our energy resources there are in fact job creation opportunities and unbelievable energy savings that could take us on the road to meeting our Kyoto obligations.

One such idea is the energy retrofitting of our public buildings. I will put this to him as he is a member of the ruling party. The federal government owns 68,000 buildings, many of which are absolute energy hogs because they were built in a time when energy was not an issue in the 1950s and 1960s. With the current energy retrofit program for the government's own buildings, it will take 150 years to actually retrofit all those buildings because they are doing a handful per year. I challenge him and his government to escalate the federal building initiative tenfold and do 5,000 buildings a year.

It will still take the government 12 or 15 years to get anywhere near full compliance, but it could serve as a demonstration to the rest of the country, to both the private sector and the public sector. It could show people how to save costs in operating buildings, conserve energy, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, create a gazillion jobs, and even create a whole new industry in terms of the new developments in technology, which we could commercialize and export.

There are things that the government could do tomorrow morning. I am trying not to be too critical of the current government, because I appreciate the tone and the content of my colleague's question, but there are things we could do tomorrow that would get us well on the way to meeting our Kyoto commitments. We can start with our own publicly owned buildings.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): 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 Langley, Human Resources; the hon. member for Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Immigration; and the hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt, Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to respond to the motion. I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Yukon.

First, I think it is very important to establish very clearly that the good faith with which the motion has been put is underscored by the overall plan that the New Democratic Party has put forward, of which there are several key components. I would like to briefly mention what they are.

The New Democratic Party's climate change plan, to which it has referred, has one section on energy efficiency, in particular of buildings, and that is what my colleague who preceded me talked about. He also talked about federal buildings and sustainability through a green purchasing plan.

The House will be interested to know that the Minister of Public Works and Government Services will be appearing before the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. He will be responding to questions which I am sure will be raised in

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respect to programs of energy efficiency in government buildings and in fact in government procurement policies with respect to hybrid vehicles, vehicles powered by alternate fuels and so on. That is a very important component of the NDP's plan, the intent of which I am sure the government and all parties would agree with.

Another section in the NDP's plan is about sustainable power for the century ahead. It talks about wind power and solar power and about meeting our carbon reductions through investments in those kinds of technologies. In fact, I could read chapter and verse on those areas where the government has, with the support of the House, been investing in those kinds of technologies, but that was done prior to my remarks. I hope that in the budget there will be an acceleration of those investments.

The New Democrats' plan also talks about investments in transit infrastructure, in particular on the side of rapid mass transit. There would be no argument there. In fact, many components of the GST reduction, what is characterized as the new deal for cities and is in fact the portion of the gas tax, will be aimed at investment in and the attempt to change behaviour with respect to mass transit.

Another aspect is sustainability. I think this is important: maximizing employment benefits. My colleague who preceded me also talked about employment benefits.

The reason I mention those components of the NDP's plan is that they are all in keeping with what I think is a good faith, straightforward approach, with elements of that approach already undertaken through initiatives of the government and supported by all sides. In fact, I would venture to say that no party in the House would disagree with anything in what I have just said.

In my perusal of the NDP's plan, and I may be wrong on this, I did not see any reference made in the transport section to the motion that is before us today. I stand to be corrected if I am wrong, but if I am right then I would like to attempt to extrapolate why I think that has happened. And if I am wrong, I ask members to take what I say at face value and see if I am right.

It seems to me that when we are dealing with the automotive sector or the transportation sector it is very important to enter into those negotiations, if we can call them that, in good faith and with every measure of goodwill that is in keeping with the complexities of that sector and the enormous implications with respect to the jobs, not only of the people directly employed in the sector, but of the people employed indirectly in other subsidiary and secondary parts of the sector.

• (1630)

In fact, parts of the automotive sector are all part of the sectors that are supported by the New Democrats and this government and that form part of the innovative and technical and technological capacity of our country. We have to be very careful that what we do to the automotive sector we do not inflict in a multiplier effect, in a domino effect, onto the rest of our economy and our workers. Indeed, if we do the wrong thing, if we get it wrong, possibly for what we think are the right reasons, then we will inflict great damage on our economy and in fact we will not go in the direction that we want to go.

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What is the history of that good faith and goodwill relationship that we have had with the automotive sector? The record shows very clearly that we have had numerous agreements of a voluntary nature which have produced substantial benefits, not only with respect to carbon reductions but with high value added right through our economy.

I would just like to talk about fuel efficiency for a moment and go through what the record states. Members may not be aware that the voluntary company average fuel consumption program has been in existence for 25 years. There has been a 25 year contractual relationship with the automotive sector that has the following record of accomplishments: steady gains in fuel consumption in the Canadian market vehicles; since 1986, passenger vehicles have averaged 8% better than the targets that were voluntarily agreed on; 2003-04 passenger car fuel consumption was 12% better than the targets; since 1990, light trucks have averaged 3% better than the targets; and then last year, light trucks bettered the targets by 6%.

What this indicates is just a case in point of a 25 year relationship that set targets where the industry was able to meet those targets and in fact do better than the targets. I would submit that the fact the automotive sector is so competitive, so integrated and so strong has resulted from this kind of relationship we have had.

Recently we have seen the kinds of multi-million dollar investments we are making in various parts of the automotive sector to keep it vibrant and that invite shareholder and worker response in terms of support to keep the sector strong.

Thus, whenever we are looking at motions dealing with a degree of arbitrariness, let us look at that in comparison to the relationship we have had and whether it is necessary at this point to take out the hammer and use that degree of force through backstop regulation or any other kind of regime.

As we know, there are negotiations going on which I think we should not fetter by prematurely imposing something that has not been in character with the traditional relationship we have had with the automotive sector, with both its corporate and its labour representatives, who are presently meeting to look at some form of regime that would be in keeping with both their desire and our public's desire to meet the carbon reductions.

There have been opportunities to approach it in this way in Europe, an approach that uses what is called eco-covenants. These eco-covenants are developed so that the degree of buy-in and the accountability that comes with it are so obvious it is more than just a memorandum of understanding; it is a commitment that technologies in keeping with the kinds of technologies we have seen out of California will continue to be committed to, technologies that are presently being developed and implemented on the assembly line.

•(1635)

I think it is in total keeping to allow that process to play itself out. The end result will be a strong automotive sector that will continue to add value and jobs and at the same time meet the environmental objectives that we all want to see attained.

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague seemed to be supportive of the NDP's plan and the motion.

Quite frankly often the government talks along those lines. The issue we have is that the Liberals have not followed through.

We now have the official implementation date of Kyoto and the government is not moving ahead with any plan.

The minister from Manitoba indicated yesterday that the failure of the federal government to have a plan is an issue. The federal Minister of the Environment said that Canada does not have a detailed plan to meet its Kyoto commitments, although it ratified Kyoto in 2002.

When the government's minister admits there is no plan, if the government members know there is a plan out there that will do the job, then the government should follow that plan. We do not have any problem with that. Go ahead and plagiarize our plan. We want to see it get into action. Plagiarize it. The government can have the copyright on it. We want to see the action. That is the problem.

People think that greenhouse gas emissions do not affect them. I represent the riding of Churchill. People are feeling it in Churchill, Manitoba. They are seeing it in the polar bear population. They are seeing issues with weights of polar bears. There is a risk that polar bears will become extinct. There is a conservation group now that is calling for the polar bear to be listed as possibly becoming extinct. If greenhouse gas emissions are not attacked aggressively now, polar bears could become extinct. The group is hoping that by calling for the polar bears to be listed in that category it will force the U.S. to get on line with the Kyoto plan.

The sad reality is we have to force our own government here in Canada to get on line and not just talk but put it into action. Why has the government not taken any action? Why would it not support this motion? We did not even give a timeline. We are saying to put the mandatory rules in place so we can get some action started to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

•(1640)

Mr. Alan Tonks: Madam Speaker, I have no problems with plagiarizing because really, plagiarizing is only a sin if one does it and does not admit to it.

In mentioning the plan, I have said that there are many elements of the position that have all-party support. I listed what they were and that should stand on its own.

The second thing is with respect to a plan. We do have a plan. The fact is we had a plan in 2000 and we had a plan in 2002. There really was not the degree of collaboration that should have taken place in establishing that plan.

The environmental and sustainable development committee is having that collaboration now. It is my hope that at the back end of that process and with the budget that will come out very shortly, the committee will use its oversight function. The committee will be able to compare what is being done with many of the suggestions that will be brought forward, including elements of the NDP's plan and those of the other parties to see whether further corrections are required. That is the approach. That is the process.

Supply

I tried to give a historical overview of my understanding of how we entered into negotiations in good faith. We have accomplished a great deal with respect to the automotive sector. We should let that play itself out because it has served us well in the past.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as a Yukon resident I have witnessed first hand the impact that climate change is already having on our land and our community. I would like to speak to two issues of strong importance to northerners, but equally important to all of Canada: reducing emissions and adapting to climate change.

Let me begin by saying that Canada is committed to the Kyoto protocol and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. These call for actions to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and for actions to adapt to the changes in climate. Our success at reducing emissions and responding to climate change will come through broad efforts to forge new thinking, build alliances and invest in knowledge and innovation to advance sustainable development.

The government is committed to developing and promoting the adoption of green technologies that will help Canadians, including northerners, develop their economy while addressing greenhouse gas emissions. For example, we are focusing research on helping northerners decrease their reliance on diesel generators. While diesel provides needed energy to remote communities and installations, it also results in greenhouse gas emissions and has several other drawbacks such as high transportation costs and storage issues.

We are working with northerners to look at lower emissions alternatives, such as the combination of biomass, wind and photovoltaic technologies. Wood based biomass centralized heating technologies are being assessed where wood biomass is readily available. Small wind turbine technologies are being considered where suitable conditions prevail and installation and maintenance is feasible.

Photovoltaic technologies are being investigated as alternative energy sources for unique applications such as communications facilities. These examples illustrate how the Government of Canada is supporting innovation to find low emissions solutions suited to unique regional circumstances. It is clear in the Kyoto protocol that adaptation is not an alternative to emissions reductions, but is a necessary complement.

The Kyoto protocol recognizes that the global climate is changing even as nations make efforts to begin reducing their emissions. A changing climate presents us with complex challenges and many risks, but also some opportunities. Through innovation we can find ways to reduce risks and take advantage of opportunities.

Adaptation is an approach to managing risks to protect people, the environment and the economy. Emissions reductions and adaptation are two equally important elements of sustainable development.

Dealing with a changing climate is important for all Canadians. As a northerner I already see the evidence of a changing climate that we need to deal with. Some examples of the changes a warmer climate is bringing to the Arctic regions are: the melting of sea ice, glaciers and permafrost; rising sea levels and coastal erosion; increased forest

fires and insect outbreaks; the movement of animal species north of their traditional ranges; and shifting vegetation zones.

These and other changes affect the ecosystems and natural resources that northern and aboriginal people have always depended on and could lead to major economic and cultural impacts. This has numerous implications for human health, transportation, infrastructure, environmental management and economic development.

The Arctic climate impact assessment, commissioned by the Arctic Council and released last November, describes in detail the impacts of climate change on the polar regions and the implications for the world. The north may be the leading indicator of things to come, but it is not the only region of Canada or the world that will have to adapt to climate change.

The broad issues faced by Canadians are well described in a Government of Canada report published last year, "Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation: A Canadian Perspective". This report details the state of knowledge on what a changing climate will mean for water resources, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, coastal zones, transportation, and human health and well-being.

● (1645)

Federal leadership on these issues is important because the issues are complex and cross domestic and international boundaries. They will require a sustained long term effort in the face of uncertainties. The government in which I have the honour to serve the people of Canada is showing this leadership.

To succeed at adapting to climate change, communities, businesses and citizens need better information on how the climate is changing, and better tools to assess the risks and plan the most effective way to respond.

Our government is supporting a great deal of research to build an essential knowledge base for Canadians. This demonstrates the government's commitment to informing Canadians of this important issue and helping them prepare for the future.

Natural Resources Canada is investing in science to help reduce the vulnerability of Canadians, their communities and the country's infrastructure to reduce climate change. For example, our earth sciences program conducts and publicizes research aimed at improving our understanding of the sensitivity to climate change of Canada's land mass and coastal areas, including permafrost, floods, landslides and storm surges.

Supply

The Canadian Forest Service is examining the impact of climate change on tree growth, forest fires, pest outbreaks, and ways to manage our forests more effectively in the face of a changing climate. Scientists work closely with partners across Canada to assess ways to further reduce impacts and costs, and to help them incorporate new knowledge into planning and resource management.

We also work closely with other federal departments, the provinces and territories, and experts across the country to create building blocks for adaptation to climate change.

We are investing \$37.5 million over five years in the climate change impacts and adaptation program. Under this program we have supported more than 130 research studies across Canada to examine the climate change risks and opportunities for a range of sectors and issues, from transportation to traditional food supplies.

The government also established the Canadian Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation Research Network, C-CIARN. Today this network reaches across Canada and into major economic sectors. The network is connecting the insights of researchers with governments, industries and communities which need to plan for a changing climate.

I have witnessed the good work of the northern node of C-CIARN. Led by Yukon College it promotes dialogue and facilitates new research on climate change impacts and adaptation measures throughout Canada's three northern territories, Nunavut, Northwest Territories and Yukon. I am proud to say that we are working very closely with other governments to develop a long term approach to responding to climate change.

In 2002 ministers of the environment and energy from the federal government, provinces and territories agreed to flesh out a national adaptation framework to guide intergovernmental collaboration. This work will soon be completed, setting the stage for more detailed planning between governments.

Together the efforts I have described make Canada one of the world's leaders in addressing adaptation as part of its climate change plan. We are in the early stages of understanding the issues and of identifying ways to deal with them. There is much more work ahead of us.

We need to sustain the development of knowledge. We need to encourage collaboration and planning to apply this knowledge. We need to engage Canadians to deal with risks and opportunities. All of these things need to be part of a sustained effort to enable prudent decision making over time.

Climate change is not just an issue for the future. Many of today's decisions and investments will last long into the future, so we need to make sure they are sustainable as the climate changes.

Therefore, we will pursue practical ways to build climate change impacts and adaptation into the government's sustainable development and strategic and operational planning. We are committed to supporting continued technology innovation and collaborating with all levels of government, industry and Canadians. Addressing the emissions reduction and adaptation challenges are both important goals of Canada's climate change plan.

• (1650)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments of my colleague who I serve with on the industry committee. I know that he takes all of his speeches here very seriously.

I have a couple of questions for him. What are his thoughts about the effects of this issue on human health? I want to use Ontario as an example. I know the member is from Yukon, but the Ontario Medical Association, for example, has done a study and estimates that smog and pollution will cost the Ontario economy about \$1 billion each year.

Given that absolute loss to the economy, setting aside the issues of how it punishes our children, seniors and other Canadians by having this infectious attack on their human health, why has the government not produced or procured an auto strategy to give confidence to the industry? Where is that? We would certainly like to see that because it was promised.

The Minister of Industry told me that he hoped to have a document in front of cabinet. Has the actual auto strategy been given to cabinet at this point in time and when are we going to see action? It has been about three and a half years since the CAPC report was initiated. It has been completed for months.

Could the hon. member shed any light on that subject matter because I believe the industry would be much more supportive if it was confident the government was behind it 100%?

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Madam Speaker, I complimented the member earlier for knowing many of the provisions the government has put in place when numerous other members of the opposition were not aware of all the programs and services.

In relation to health, I totally agree with him. The government totally agrees that smog and air pollution are very detrimental to people's health. That is why I was very disappointed, when I asked the first question this morning related to the programs and regulations, that no one was aware that the particular reduction I was talking about would save 2,100 premature deaths, 93,000 incidents of bronchitis in children, reduce 5 million other health related incidents of asthma attacks, and 11 million acute respiratory symptoms.

Many of the items in our plan are to get Canadians off fossil fuels, such as: wind energy, which was big in the throne speech and the budget; ethanol; solar energy; biomass; work on geothermal and hydrogen; green infrastructure for municipalities; education of the public; the EnerGuide program, where 140,000 people have taken advantage of; and \$10 million for carbon sequestration. All these things are important to help reduce the greenhouse gases and the concomitant smog, and to reduce the health risks that the member raised.

•(1655)

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member is aware of the 2001 report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which found that the last 50 years of human activity were directly related to the issue of global warming. The Arctic climate change report came down in November 2004.

Since the member is from Yukon, I am sure the member has seen the effects on habitat, polar bears, ice floes, et cetera, and how pollution issues from southern areas of Canada have had an impact on the north. I wonder if he could make some comments with regard to these impacts, particularly in light of those reports.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Madam Speaker, it is ironic that I spoke at a conference partly funded by the Government of Canada two weeks ago on climate change. It was great to work with 400 scientists. Canada has some of the leading scientists in the world at Environment Canada.

One of the people who spoke before me said climate change was still just a theory. I departed from my notes and explained how the permafrost is melting the ice roads that we depend on for the economy in the north, how species are moving away from the aboriginal villages that have need of them, how building foundations are collapsing causing all sorts of expenses, how mud is pouring into the Arctic Ocean where the permafrost is melting, and how Alaska is taking away an entire island to save a community on the coast.

Climate change is already in the north, which was a point in my speech. In the south, it is important, as per this motion, that we reduce greenhouse gases, but in the north we also need pillar 2, which is the adaptation to the changes that we are facing so severely in the north.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Hamilton Centre.

I would like to begin my speech on this important motion on mandatory emission standards and talk about why voluntary emission standards have not worked. We have seen this in other areas as well.

We have seen it in the voluntary program for energy efficient homes, a program that was started in 1982 and that members of the government raised a number of times in the debate today. That program to promote energy efficient homes, which was started in the 1980s through a voluntary program, has resulted in less than 10,000 R-2000 energy efficient homes actually being built over a 20 year period. That means about .6% of Canada's new housing starts have involved these energy efficient homes. In other words, that is a failure rate of over 99%.

Let us talk about voluntary standards in another sector, which is voluntary greenhouse gas reduction efforts announced with loud acclaim by the Liberal government in 1995. Companies were invited to report greenhouse gas emissions and actions taken to reduce them. At the end of 1999 there were 1,000 companies registered with these voluntary standards. Only 10% of the companies that registered actually provided detailed greenhouse gas information. In other words, the failure rate of those voluntary standards was 90%.

Supply

We have talked today and other hon. colleagues have raised the fact that we have had a total failure by the Liberal government to actually deal with greenhouse gas emissions. The supposed plan that was put into place was supposed to result in a 20% reduction and we have actually seen a 20% increase. Today members of the government seem to be proud of that deplorable fact that our greenhouse gases have actually gone up when their plan called for a reduction.

What should be a source of shame to all members in all corners of the House is that the OECD has indicated, for 25 environmental indicators, Canada's overall ranking to be 28th out of 29 OECD nations. So much for success on the environmental front. So much for success in putting the plan into effect. We are 28th out of 29 and members of the Liberal government are actually proud of that fact. It is deplorable and that is why the NDP and the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, who is very concerned about our environmental future as a nation, brought forward this motion today. Canadians are crying out for decisive government action in this area.

We have seen Liberal failures. I would like to talk about the Conservatives for just a moment because it is unclear exactly what position they are taking this time. My colleague from New Westminster—Coquitlam did mention that he could support the motion. Certainly, coming from the area that he does, neighbouring my riding of Burnaby—New Westminster, I can understand he is aware of the concern about the growing pollution problems.

However, two other members, the member for Oshawa and the member for Essex, actually said they would be opposing this motion. If so, obviously neither the member for Oshawa nor the member for Essex actually had their speech vetted by the leader of the Conservative Party because this is what the leader of the Conservative Party said in the last election. This comes from the public domain, the CTV website. The leader of the Conservative Party told supporters during the election campaign last June that the Tories would pass a new clean air bill that would include mandatory limits on emissions, with targeted levels.

Very clearly, we have the leader of the Conservative Party, who obviously did not vet the speeches from the member for Oshawa or the member for Essex, speaking in favour of mandatory emissions. That is not all. We have the environment critic from the Conservative Party making the commitment again in the June 28 election to regulate fuel economy in automobiles in order to attain 25% improvement in efficiency.

•(1700)

What we have are members of the Conservative Party saying very clearly in an election campaign that they supported mandatory emissions, and some members at least of the same Conservative Party are now, after the election is finished and obviously after the voters have chosen, saying that they oppose mandatory emissions.

What is wrong with this picture? I think it would be charitable at best to say it is deceptive to support mandatory emissions during an election campaign and then not support them in this House when the time comes to actually make a decision and support the Canadian environment.

Supply

I would also like to mention that the Conservative environment critic said that the position on mandatory fuel efficiency was party policy. This was in a reply to a questionnaire sent to the Sierra Club of Canada. Clearly, we have failure on the government's part. We have some incoherence from the official opposition.

What do Canadians say? In a poll that was done last year just prior to the election, and that is perhaps why at least in two corners of this House there was lip service paid to the environment, 94% of Canadians showed support for fuel economy. In other words, 94% of Canadians supported mandatory fuel efficiency regulations, including requiring better mileage and lowering greenhouse gas emissions from Canadian cars and trucks. We are talking about a widespread consensus within the Canadian population that this has to happen.

I would suggest woe is the member of Parliament who comes away from this House having voted against what 94% of Canadians support. In the next election, whether that is in a month or a year, those kinds of issues will be part of the public domain. Woe to those who go against what they committed to as members of the Conservative Party or as members of the Liberal Party in the last election.

Since there is widespread Canadian support right across the country, including British Columbia, it is obvious that Canadians understand what is at stake.

The B.C. Medical Association estimates 2,000 premature deaths per year in British Columbia each year as a result of air pollution. In Ontario, 20% of hospital admissions for infants under the age of one for bronchitis and pneumonia can be attributed to smog. We are not talking about a small issue. We are talking about an issue that Canadians understand. Canadians understand the consequences of not acting.

We have already talked about voluntary standards being a failure. Let us talk a bit about what has succeeded in the past. The NDP government in British Columbia put in place a clean air program. That program up until the year 2000 succeeded in reducing common air contaminants by 40% over the period of the clean air program. It actually succeeded in reducing per capita emission reduction by 60%. What we saw was clear action by the provincial NDP government in British Columbia. It succeeded in having a substantial impact on the state of air in British Columbia, particularly in the Lower Mainland.

That is why when we look at the polls in B.C., the New Democratic Party is leading. Since then, of course, we have stumbled backwards under the Gordon Campbell Liberals. I think British Columbians are feeling this issue as strongly as any other Canadians and will be voting accordingly in the election to be held in May of this year.

Given that the clean air act brought in by the B.C. NDP government was able to actually reduce the smog provoking emissions, what do we have to contend with when we talk about greenhouse gases and carbon dioxide emissions? In the Greater Vancouver Regional District, part of which I represent, we are looking now at 17,766,109 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions. This is up from 12 billion in 1995. If we do not take action, that situation will get worse.

● (1705)

That is why the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley as well as the member for Toronto—Danforth, our leader, and members of Parliament for Windsor—Tecumseh and for Windsor West have been pushing a green car strategy. We believe in a green car strategy. We believe in saving Canadian jobs by expanding our technology and dealing with this worldwide trend and we will continue to that.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and I believe if you were to request it, you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding the Order made December 7 and 8, 2004, with respect to travel to St. John's, Newfoundland, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Fredericton, New Brunswick and Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Montreal in relation to its studies on the new citizenship legislation, recognition of foreign credentials and family reunification, seven members of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration be authorized to travel in April 2005, and that the necessary staff do accompany the committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): Does the hon. chief government whip have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—THE ENVIRONMENT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by the hon. member in praise of a certain New Democratic government. Is he aware of what happened in Ontario with a New Democratic government? That government made every effort to slow down construction of the Darlington nuclear station, with the result that the coal-fired power plant north of Lake Erie is still in operation and will be until 2007. It is the biggest source of pollution in North America. It is still there because we had a New Democratic government in Ontario.

Is he aware of that, and is he prepared to denounce the New Democratic government we had only once and I hope shall never have again in the future in my province?

• (1710)

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that, once again, an hon. member from the Liberal Party should be criticizing, when his party is in power in Canada and in Ontario, a government that made possible enormous progress in a period of extreme economic difficulty, from 1990 to 1995. We know very well that Ontario inherited a debt of over \$2 billion from the Liberal Party.

Of course, after all the tricks by the Liberal Party in Ontario—which we continue to see here, at the federal level—we notice that the hon. members of the Liberal Party are still trying to shift their responsibilities onto someone else.

The members and hon. members of the Liberal Party are responsible for a 20% increase in greenhouse gas emissions. They could have changed something, they could have acted. But no, instead of acting, they do nothing, they try to blame others. That is no longer good enough. I think that Canadians showed very clearly at the end of June they are no longer satisfied with the Liberal Party's casting blame on anyone and everyone across the country.

[English]

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agreed with some of the hon. members comments. Although, on his point about the virtues of the British Columbia NDP government, the electorate in British Columbia made it very clear what they thought of its actions. I do not think we have a lot to learn from the B.C. government.

What we do have a lot to learn is the fact that this government has said that greenhouse gas emissions is very important. We know that single cars play a very important role as they are largest source of emissions. We have said that we want to negotiate a voluntary agreement which has clear targets and timelines.

Those people over there are obviously not listening. I understand why. They do not want to learn anything. Having clear targets and actions are important.

I want to point out to those members that if we have to bring in regulations, we will. Unlike that party, we are concerned about jobs in the country. We are concerned about having a strong economy and a strong environment.

He lives in a bit of a wonderland to suggest that we can do all these things without looking at the other side of the coin, which is a strong economy. I thought maybe the CAW had changed its mind. However, I would assume it is concerned about good quality jobs in the auto industry as well.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, it is fair to say that we have nothing to learn from a government that has not even put an auto policy in place. We have nothing to learn from a government that on its watch has led Canada to the second highest per capita emission of greenhouse gases in the world, with emissions growing at 1.5% every year. We have nothing to learn from a government that has a 90% failure rate when it comes to voluntary greenhouse gas reduction efforts, a 99% failure rate when it comes to energy

Private Members' Business

efficient housing and a planned 20% reduction that has developed into a 20% increase.

We have nothing to learn from the Liberal government.

• (1715)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): It being 5:15 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, all questions necessary for disposal of the opposition motion shall be deemed put, and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Tuesday, February 22, 2005, at the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders.

[English]

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. If you seek it, I believe you would find unanimous consent to see the clock as 5:30.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): Accordingly the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT

Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): moved that Bill S-3, an act to amend the Official Languages Act (promotion of English and French) be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and a privilege for me to speak again about Bill S-3, an act to amend the Official Languages Act (promotion of English and French). You will recall that I sponsored the same bill, known as S-4, during the last Parliament.

First, allow me to name the instigator of this bill, the former senator—I think that I will say the senator for the rest of his life—the hon. Jean-Robert Gauthier. He used this bill to fight for the entire francophone community in Canada, and of course, for the anglophone minority in Quebec as well, because it applies to both minorities. The bill is aimed therefore at both minorities and is equal in this regard.

The senator has retired now, at least in theory. However, he continues to actively follow the development of francophones outside Quebec, the progress of his bill, and of course, he also continues to work and campaign for a number of causes.

Bill S-3, like S-4 before it, is intended to give the Official Languages Act more bite, to repeat an expression that Jean-Robert Gauthier always uses. Senator Gauthier has gone to bat four times on behalf of this bill since 2001 with bills S-32, S-11, S-4 and, of course, the one before us today, S-3.

Private Members' Business

Before turning to the broad outline of this bill, allow me to use this opportunity to highlight all that Jean-Robert Gauthier has done as a parliamentarian, in both this chamber and the other.

When I was a new MP in 1984, Jean-Robert Gauthier had already been a parliamentarian here for 12 years, having been elected in 1972 and re-elected in 1974, 1979, 1980 and, like me, 1984. Some people say now that I have learned a little about parliamentary procedure. If that is true, it is thanks to Jean-Robert Gauthier, who kind of adopted me in this regard and taught me the rudiments of procedure in the beginning. Most of all, he inculcated the values into me of being a good parliamentarian, spending a lot of time in the House of Commons and learning to love this institution.

I thought today that I would take advantage of this opportunity to congratulate and thank Jean-Robert Gauthier, not only for what he has done for the linguistic communities and for Canada in general by serving in both chambers of our Parliament, but also personally for all the help he gave me.

Now, Bill S-3 focuses on three major principles: first, it provides that federal institutions must implement Part VII of the Official Languages Act and that regulations may be made in respect of procedures for carrying out obligations under section 41 of the Act.

• (1720)

Secondly, the bill obliges the government to take the necessary steps to implement the commitments provided for in Part VII of the Official Languages Act, and finally, it provides the right to apply to the courts for remedy against a violation of Part VII of the Official Languages Act.

Bill S-3 takes account of most of the recommendations made by the Commissioner of Official Languages. I think it is very important to add this. The Commissioner of Official Languages has raised these issues on many occasions. For example, in her annual report for 2003-2004, an entire section entitled "Clarification of Part VII of the Act needed" was devoted to section 41. That is the title of this section recommended by the Commissioner of Official Languages. It is not only Jean-Robert Gauthier—which is already saying a lot—and your humble servant who say so, but also the Commissioner of Official Languages.

In her previous annual report, the same commissioner again recommended that the government clarify the legal scope of the commitment set forth in section 41 of the Act and take the necessary measures to effectively fulfil its responsibilities in this regard. Once again, that was the Commissioner of Official Languages speaking, an objective person in whom we have confidence, an officer of this Parliament, whom we chose unanimously.

So it is time to go further. It is time to give the Government of Canada the tools to enhance the vitality of the francophone and anglophone minorities, given that the phenomenon applies to both, although it may have extra significance for francophones. It must be said that services in our language are by no means offered on all occasions. It is time to ensure government takes the necessary steps to carry through on its commitment.

Bill S-3 takes account of most of the recommendations made by the Commissioner of Official Languages. It has been amended several times, precisely in order to improve it and make it better. In

the constituency of the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst, the courts have delivered a ruling on the implementation of the Official Languages Act. Now, it is not always clear whether the Act has this enforceable character or not. The government's position has always been that it was declaratory only, and not enforceable. The Commissioner of Official Languages says that this is not clear. This bill aims to clarify this very point.

If some say that this goes too far, I would even be prepared to accept recommendations on this point. We shall see in committee whether certain of the suggestions made initially by Senator Jean-Robert Gauthier and now by myself have to be modified. The views of anyone are reasonable in this regard.

Whatever the case, it is the Commissioner of Official Languages who recommended that Part VII of the Official Languages Act be clarified, together with the imperative nature of the commitment imposing obligations on federal institutions.

The Commissioner maintained that the bill should provide for the adoption of regulations, so as to ensure the implementation of an appropriate regime and a right to judicial remedy under section 10 of the Official Languages Act. This aspect of the bill derives directly from a recommendation by the Commissioner. As our good friend Senator Jean-Robert Gauthier used to say so well, a statute without regulations is like a watchdog without teeth. It is now time to give more bite to this Official Languages Act by adopting the measures provided for in the bill.

• (1725)

It is time to go further; it is time to give the Government of Canada the tools it needs to foster the development of francophone and anglophone minorities. It is time to ensure that the necessary steps are taken to implement the government's commitment.

I also want to highlight the contribution made by a young man who worked for Senator Jean-Robert Gauthier for a long time, municipal councillor Sébastien Goyer. He drafted much of the text and did extraordinary work as an employee of the Senate, at the same time, as we all know, he has been a municipal councillor in the township of Russell, in the electoral district I have the honour and privilege of representing. I just wanted to take a moment to congratulate Sébastien Goyer.

It is rather symbolic that we are discussing this bill today. It was one week ago that I reported to the House on the intolerance of a newspaper toward the francophone minority in Ontario. I am speaking of the *Ottawa Citizen*. Unfortunately, this paper used appalling language to describe a municipal bylaw in the town of Rockland in my riding.

That article stirred up the public. There were death threats. Bomb threats were made to the town hall and the child care centre. Unfortunately, I must report that today, again, the Rockland child care centre had to be evacuated for the same reason.

All of that, unfortunately, was incited by a newspaper, a formerly respectable one, which is celebrating 160 years of existence this year, and which refuses even to apologize for its actions to the francophone community. The final words I have to say on this bill I am sponsoring will be addressed to the *Ottawa Citizen*.

Private Members' Business

[English]

I would like to take the last few minutes I have to deal with my bill today to tell the *Ottawa Citizen* to wake up and smell the coffee and apologize to my constituents for its inappropriate actions in the past, which have caused damage as late as today in the great riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. I speak to it directly again in repeating this.

[Translation]

Mr. Maka Kotto (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Official Languages Act in its current form already includes all the necessary tools for the federal government to ensure the full development of official language minority communities.

Can the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell enlighten us on the reasons why his government has not reached its goals with the original act, after so many years?

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I hope I misunderstood the question. The hon. member said, I think, that the legislation provides the government with enough tools. Is he saying that the Commissioner of Official Languages is wrong when she says we need to clarify and give teeth to Part VII of the Act because it lacks enforceability?

I am not sure if that is what he is trying to say. I hope I misunderstood when he said we currently have enough tools. In my speech I referred to the three consecutive reports. Four bills have been tabled in the Senate that make us realize this is not true. It is not the case.

I hope the hon. member misspoke or that I did not hear him properly when he said the legislation gives the federal government enough authority. That is not the case.

The member for Acadie—Bathurst is here and he knows the situation in his riding. I am sure he does not think the Official Languages Act has enough enforceability in his riding. We saw what happened a few months ago. It happened here and we talked about it in the House. Questions were asked and cases were made at the Standing Committee on Official Languages, which I chaired not so long ago.

The Act clearly lacks authority. This fact has been brought up many times.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Don Boudria: The heckling opposite will not change this fact.

• (1730)

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for my colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, who said that the act needs to be given “more teeth” in order for the government to ensure that the official languages are respected.

In my riding, it is true that the case involving *Le Forum des maires de la Péninsule acadienne* and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency was before the courts. It is also true that the *Forum des maires* won in Federal Court and that the Food Inspection Agency, i.e. the federal government, is continuing to appeal to the Supreme Court in the hope that the *Forum des maires* will lose its case. If the federal

government just kept quiet when we win a case in court, maybe minorities could make some progress.

I can see that the law needs “more teeth” and agree with Bill S-3. But why does the government appeal every time that the communities win cases in the courts? It is the federal government, the Liberal government, that is not doing its job and does not respect minorities in Canada.

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I agree in part but not totally with what the hon. member said. I do recognize that the legislation is not entirely clear. Witness, the fact that we have been forever hearing about the declaratory nature of this act. A court has determined that it was enforceable. The government agency in question, which continues to maintain that it is declaratory, is once again going before the courts to seek clarification.

The hon. member and I am saying one and the same thing: let us give the Official Languages Act clarity—I am not alone in saying so; the Commissioner to Official Languages said so repeatedly—to put an end to this once and for all. This way, it will be made clear in the act that a part to be determined will be enforceable, as I indicated in my bill, or amendments can be made in committee, as required. Still, it will be clear now, and we will no longer face the kind of situation faced in Acadie—Bathurst. It is even worse elsewhere, because, at least, in the Acadie—Bathurst case, some say it is enforceable, including the trial court that made the determination in the matter. Elsewhere, the opposite decision was made.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, listening to my hon. colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell respond to the hon. member for Saint-Lambert, I admired his remarkable parliamentary skills, which were coloured by some degree of demagoguery, however. He addressed at length one aspect of the preamble, but trying to avoid answering the question.

My hon. colleague from Saint-Lambert said, in different words, exactly the same thing as the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, as we heard a moment ago: until now, the federal government considered that part VII was declaratory only, which was enough as far as it was concerned to protect the francophone and Acadian communities of Canada.

What the hon. member for Saint-Lambert was asking is: why is it that, after so many years, are we now realizing that part VII needs to be made enforceable, because the federal government was unable to properly protect francophone and Acadian communities? My question to my hon. colleague is the following. Why is it that the objectives set under the Official Languages Act were not achieved? That is my question.

• (1735)

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is using other terms, indicating he has amended the question, and I recognize that he has. But in his question he says that the legislation is declaratory, not executory and wonders how there could be insufficient powers in something that was declaratory and not executory.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I am speaking of the law in general.

Private Members' Business

Hon. Don Boudria: The law, he says, but it is not the law in general we are amending, but rather Part VII of the Official Languages Act. The colleague sitting behind him knows that act personally, and could explain it to him. What we are trying to change is not the executory part, but the part described as declaratory, which we want to make executory. It is already the case for the rest of the act.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I am giving the hon. member an explanation. I cannot do more than that.

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak to Bill S-3. I would be remiss if I did not begin by paying tribute to the role played by former Senator Jean-Robert Gauthier, his exceptional devotion and untiring efforts on behalf of francophone minorities and the promotion of their rights. Senator Jean-Robert Gauthier is the very soul of this bill.

I had the privilege of sitting on the Joint Committee on Official Languages, a committee where partisan politics were very often set aside in order to focus our efforts on promoting the francophone communities. Throughout our debates and deliberations, I was able to witness the efforts of francophones living in minority situations as well as their marvellous tenacity. They deserve our total admiration.

Since its inception, The Bloc Québécois has been a staunch defender of francophone minorities. My friend and colleague, the hon. member for Verchères—Les Patriotes, is also a strong defender of the Acadians in particular.

Implementation of Part VII of the Official Languages Act has been hotly debated for close to 20 years. At this point it is important to read section 41 of the present Official Languages Act, along with its proposed replacement in Bill S-3.

Section 41 at present reads:

The Government of Canada is committed to enhancing the vitality of the English and French linguistic minority communities in Canada and supporting and assisting their development; and fostering the full recognition and use of both English and French in Canadian society.

The words “is committed to” are extremely important here. However, Bill S-3 stipulates:

Section 41 of the Official Languages Act is renumbered as subsection 41(1) and is amended by adding the following:

(2) Within the scope of their functions, duties and powers, federal institutions shall ensure that positive measures are taken for the ongoing and effective advancement and implementation of the Government of Canada’s commitments under subsection (1).

(3) The Governor in Council may make regulations in respect of federal institutions, other than the Senate, the House of Commons or the Library of Parliament, prescribing the manner in which any duties of those institutions under this Part are to be carried out.

So, the aim of this amendment, as our colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell mentioned, is to section 41 enforceable and provide guidance for its interpretation by the courts.

Subsection 43(1) currently states:

The Minister of Canadian Heritage shall take such measures as that Minister considers appropriate to advance the equality of status and use of English and French

in Canadian society and, without restricting the generality of the foregoing, may take measures to—

If Bill S-3 were passed, this subsection would read as follows:

The Minister of Canadian Heritage shall take appropriate measures to advance the equality of status and use of English and French in Canadian society and, without restricting the generality of the foregoing, may take measures to—

So, the words “such measures as that Minister considers appropriate” are being stricken and replaced with “appropriate measures”.

Finally, Part VII is being added to subsection 77(1) of the Official Languages Act, which would read:

Any person who has made a complaint to the Commissioner in respect of a right or duty under sections 4 to 7, sections 10 to 13 or Part IV, V or VII, or in respect of section 91, may apply to the Court for a remedy—

First, I want to give a historical overview of Bill S-3.

This is the fourth bill that Senator Jean-Robert Gauthier presented in the Senate during the 37th and 38th Parliaments. During the 37th Parliament, he had first proposed Bill S-32 in the first session, then Bill S-11 during the second session, and finally Bill S-4 during the third session. These three almost identical bills preceded Bill S-3, which is before us today. The previous bills died on the order paper when the House prorogued.

After reading and thoroughly studying the bill before us, we must state that we cannot accept it as is. First, we could not accept S-4 during the previous legislature. Moreover, this version of the bill only removes the word “nécessaires”—after the words “mesures positives” in the French text—in sections 41 and 43. In Bill S-4 we read, and I quote:

Within the scope of their functions, duties and powers, federal institutions shall ensure that positive measures are taken for the ongoing and effective advancement and implementation of the Government of Canada’s commitments—

In Bill S-3 we read:

Within the scope of their functions, duties and powers, federal institutions shall ensure that positive measures are taken for the ongoing and effective advancement and implementation of the Government of Canada’s commitments—

In the French text, the word “nécessaires”—meaning necessary—has been removed.

● (1740)

Regarding section 43, the English version of Bill S-4 reads “The Minister of Canadian Heritage shall take appropriate measures—” and in Bill S-3, it says “The Minister of Canadian Heritage shall take appropriate measures—” but in the French, the word “nécessaires” has been removed.

Nothing was changed in section 7, where the new bill continues to direct that Part VIII be added.

The reasons the Bloc Québécois opposed Bill S-4 have not changed. We believed then that the scope of section 41 was too broad and too vague and lacked definition.

Private Members' Business

There is another aspect that one forgets in a debate like this, and that is the fact that the two minority language communities in Quebec and in Canada are not on an equal footing. They do not have the same needs. Some francophone communities in Canada are still very fragile. The rate of assimilation of francophones continues to be very high.

One major flaw in the Official Languages Act lies in the fact that it does not recognize the asymmetry between the linguistic minorities in Canada at this time. The situation of francophones outside Quebec is much more worrisome and precarious than that of anglo-Quebeckers, and the act should recognize this.

I am sure that the sponsor of this bill, the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, and Senator Gauthier, if he was watching, recognize this fact, but unfortunately this reality is not reflected in the bill and that poses a problem.

The architect of the official languages action plan wrote, in reference to anglophone rights in Quebec, that French Canadians in other provinces can only dream of having the same conditions.

The Council of Europe wrote in its political affairs report that the minority anglophone situation in Quebec is an excellent example of protecting a minority language group's rights.

The Commissioner of Official Languages said something along the same lines during an RDI interview when she said that we must recognize that Quebec—which is where most French Canadians live—is nonetheless a minority in the Canadian federation and therefore a certain asymmetry exists.

However, some departments already use an asymmetrical approach in terms of implementing responsibility pursuant to part VII of the Act. Look at the way Citizenship and Immigration handled the parity committees, which exist only for minority Francophones and Acadians.

Yet, in the fourth version of this bill, the concept of asymmetry is still not included.

These are the main reasons we conclude that, as it stands today, Bill S-3 does not meet the laudable objectives it had set for itself, that is, to encourage the development of minority francophone communities and protect their rights.

The Bloc Québécois recognizes the particular situation of French-speaking minorities and it hopes the Liberal government will recognize this particularity as well.

The Bloc Québécois cannot support Bill S-3 unless it is amended to include the concept of asymmetry, which has been recognized by everyone involved in this issue.

I would like to point out, in closing, that the federal government may now and for some time past feel obliged by section 41 to take measures in support of the development of francophone minority communities. It is obvious, however, that the federal government chooses not to see anything binding in part VII of the Official Languages Act and does not really impose any obligations upon itself to take positive measures. This brings us to this bill designed to twist its arm and force it to assume its responsibilities in terms of supporting francophone minorities. It is because of the government's

lack of political will that we are finding ourselves in this situation today.

The Bloc Québécois believes that applying the same measures across the board, in Quebec and in Canada, would prejudice the uniqueness of the heart of francophone Canada. The government knows it very well.

The Bloc Québécois opposed Bill S-4 previously. Well aware of that fact, the government still introduces an almost identical bill. Why?

Sometimes, I wonder if the government is not purposely introducing legislation it knows full well to be incomplete. The government keeps introducing legislation that makes no room for asymmetrical needs, as recommended by the likes of the Commissioner of Official Languages, the father of the government official languages action plan, the president of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne. But why does it do that?

Perhaps this explains why the bills in question always have names like S-3, S-4, S-11 and S-32, which means that they originated in the Senate, instead of being called C-3, C-4, C-11 and C-32, as bills inspired by the government would be.

• (1745)

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first I want to congratulate the author of this bill, Senator Gauthier, now retired. I also want to thank my hon. colleague opposite, who represents the riding next to mine, for defending this cause in the House.

[*English*]

The major purpose of the bill is to make the commitments set out in part VII of the Official Languages Act binding on the government. The way the act is worded now, the fulfillment of the objectives in part VII is left up to the discretion of the government. The bill before us today would allow the courts to enforce the implementation of part VII.

I can understand why Senator Gauthier felt this bill was necessary. Section 41 of the Official Languages Act commits the federal government to:

- (a) enhance the vitality of the English and French linguistic minority communities in Canada and support and assist their development; and
- b) fostering the full recognition and use of both English and French in Canadian society.

The government has failed dismally on both counts.

In 2004, the Federal Court of Appeal stated that:

Section 41 is declaratory of a commitment and does not create any right or duty that could at this point be enforced by the courts, by any procedure whatsoever.

In other words, the court ruled that section 41 of the Official Languages Act was a broad statement of principle and not an actual legal obligation. The court went on to say:

The debate over section 41 must be conducted in Parliament, not in the courts.

Bill S-3 addresses this ruling in two ways. First, it would add subsections requiring all federal institutions to take “positive measures...for the ongoing and effective advancement and implementation” of section 41.

Private Members' Business

Second, it would add part VII of the Official Languages Act to a list of specific sections of the act that are justiciable which is contained in section 77.

[*Translation*]

Simply put, this bill would clearly establish that, if the government does not carry out its duties under part VII of the Official Languages Act, it can be taken to court and forced to do so.

[*English*]

Simply put, the bill would make it clear that if the government does not live up to the obligations under part VII of the Official Languages Act it could be taken to court and forced to fulfill these obligations.

As a general principle I am very supportive of legislation that removes wiggle room for ministers and holds them to their commitments. However I am afraid the bill might not be drafted in the best way to achieve that goal.

My first concern with Bill S-3 involves section 41. Provincial governments have complained in the past that this section of the Official Languages Act infringes on their jurisdiction. The Bloc Québécois members made the same argument the last time the bill came before the House and I expect them to raise the same objection this time around.

My concern is that making section 41 justiciable, allowing it to be the subject of court action would clear the way for court challenges that might result in section 41 and the rest of part VII of the Official Languages Act being struck down on the grounds that it was ultra vires, outside the jurisdiction of the federal Parliament.

This concern was raised in committee in 2002 by the Minister of Justice at that time. To prevent this from happening I would like to work with my colleagues in the Standing Committee on Official Languages to amend the bill, perhaps by adding a section that explicitly respects the provinces and limits the federal government to its own jurisdiction in the way it fulfills section 41 of the act.

My second concern involves another section of the Official Languages Act that is affected by the bill, section 43. While Bill S-3 seeks to make the government's commitment under part VII of the Official Languages Act more enforceable, it does not clarify the scope of these commitments. As a result I fear that unless the bill is amended, it could result in a wave of court actions and the loss of parliamentary control over the nature and extent of the cost of the government's official languages program.

Section 43 currently states:

The Minister of Canadian Heritage shall take such measures as that Minister considers appropriate to advance the equality of status and use of English and French in Canadian society and...may take measures to (a) enhance the vitality of the English and French linguistic minority communities...; (b) encourage and support the learning of English and French in Canada; (c) foster an acceptance and appreciation of both English and French by members of the public; (d) encourage and assist provincial governments to support the development of English and French linguistic minority communities—

Bill S-3 would change the wording of section 43 to clarify that the heritage minister “shall take appropriate measures to advance the equality of status and use of English and French in Canadian society”. However while it removes the minister's discretion when it

comes to that general goal, it still leaves subsections (a) through (d), the list of specific measures totally up to the discretion of the minister.

What that means is that the minister does not have to do any of the specific things listed in section 43, but if someone is unsatisfied with the minister's performance when it comes to a very general objective, the person could take the matter to court regardless of whether the minister takes any or all of the specific measures listed.

• (1750)

[*Translation*]

This bill is supposed to reinforce implementation of the government's commitments under part VII of the Official Languages Act. However, with regard to section 43, only the most general provisions would be binding, while the specific obligations identified in that section would remain discretionary.

To me, this is completely backwards. It would be much more logical to leave the first part of section 43 discretionary and make the specific measures binding. The legislation would then give clear direction to the minister, and a specific legal framework by which the courts could determine if the minister was carrying out his duties or not.

[*English*]

This bill is supposed to make the government's commitment under part VII of the Official Languages Act more enforceable. However, in the case of section 43, only the most general provisions would be mandatory while the specific obligations in that section would remain discretionary. That seems totally backwards to me.

It would make far more sense to have the first part of section 43 discretionary and make the specific measures mandatory. That way the act would give the minister clear direction and it would give the courts a clear framework for deciding whether or not the minister was fulfilling his or her obligations.

In other words, it would better if we could change the last part of section 43 to say “the minister must” instead of “the minister may” take measures to enhance the vitality of official language minority communities, encourage and support the learning of English and French, and so on, while leaving the more general part as a statement of principles. That would make it much easier to implement the act.

This is something my hon. colleague from Lanark—Carleton suggested the last time the bill was before us. I think it is a shame that Senator Gauthier did not see fit to make these changes before making another attempt to get the bill through Parliament.

I hope we can make suitable amendments to the bill in committee to make it more effective in meeting the goals.

I will support this bill in principle. I will encourage my colleagues on this side of the House to do likewise, although they will be free to vote as they see fit since this is an item of private members' business. I think the intention of the bill is something that many members would consider to be reasonable and worthwhile.

Private Members' Business

• (1755)

[Translation]

I will agree in principle with this bill and I invite my Conservative colleagues to do the same. I believe that a good many members consider the intention of this bill to be reasonable and valid.

[English]

Having said that, I am afraid some of the bill's specific provisions may be seriously flawed in the ways I have described. I hope to work with all members in committee to improve the bill and perhaps to make it achieve its goals more effectively.

I look forward to hearing from witnesses, looking into the wording of the bill, bringing it back to the House and if necessary, amending it and sending it back to the Senate. It would be a shame to rush this legislation through, only to find that it had the opposite of its intended use.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak today on Bill S-3, an act to amend the Official Languages Act (promotion of English and French). I would like to thank the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell for sponsoring this bill.

Before going into the topic in depth, I would like to thank Senator Jean-Robert Gauthier, now retired from political life, for his legacy. He always worked very hard for the francophone cause in this country, to eliminate injustices and to ensure the equality of this country's two official languages. Thank you, Senator Gauthier, and happy retirement. Although he is retired, I am sure the senator is still working hard on behalf of Canada's minorities.

There are three major components to Bill S-3.

First, there is the federal government's commitment to enhancing the vitality and supporting the development of the English and French linguistic minority communities of Canada and to fostering full recognition and use of English and French in Canadian society; encourage the official

Second, the Minister of Canadian Heritage shall take appropriate measures to advance the equality of status and use of English and French in Canadian society.

Third, any person who has made a complaint to the Commissioner in respect of a right or duty under sections 4 to 7, sections 10 to 13 or Part IV, V or VII, or in respect of section 91, may apply to the Court for a remedy under this Part.

However, the very essence of this bill is to reinforce the enforceable rather than declaratory nature of the obligations incumbent on the Government of Canada under part VII of the Official Languages Act.

For the past 17 years, the Government of Canada has had an Official Languages Act in order to remedy injustices within the francophone and anglophone communities.

Yet the problem has always been the government's failure to recognize the executory nature of its obligations under section 41 of the Official Languages Act.

Once and for all, we need to ensure that the government will honour its obligations in this respect.

The Commissioner of Official Languages has, moreover, recommended clarification of part VII, that is clarification of its mandatory nature and the commitment of the federal government. The problem encountered within federal institutions as far as bilingualism in the public service is concerned is that bilingual service to the Canadian public is poor. Francophone organizations end up having to deal with unilingual anglophones. Examples of this abound, the SANB and the SNA for instance., so there is a problem.

On that subject, I would like to add that not long ago the Standing Committee on Official Languages heard from the president of PSAC. She said there had been a complaint in the public service because an employee had received a letter of reprimand. This public servant, in Ottawa, in a federal office, had spoken in French. That is the point I want to raise.

Imagine what things would be like today if the government ignored the fact that senior managers in the federal government had reprimanded a francophone because he or she had used his or her mother tongue. The senior manager is the one who should be reprimanded. It certainly does not give an anglophone, who has worked hard to learn French in order to be able to serve the public in both official languages, a chance to put that second language into practice. It makes no sense.

The problem is really the government itself which does not respect the two official languages here in Canada, since it lets a senior manager act this way.

Yes, it is true that the law needs more teeth. At the same time, we need a government with more backbone.

• (1800)

If the federal government, the Liberal government, opposes Bill S-3, the message will be sent that it does not wish to respect our country's two official languages. This is the fourth time such a bill has been introduced in Parliament.

Today, Bill S-3 has come to us from the Senate. The senators thought voting in favour of this bill was the right thing and the wise thing to do. There were Conservatives there who agreed with it. We hope that the Conservatives here in the House of Commons will take a lesson from those older Conservatives, the ones that were called Progressive Conservatives. They must remember we have two languages that we must respect.

In the action plan for official languages, \$751 million is earmarked to support the official languages. Each time, the francophone communities win something in court. They have had to go to court in order to obtain their rights and respect. The federal government goes to the appeal court.

I will give you an example. This morning's *L'Acadie nouvelle* reports:

Food Inspection Agency positions reinstated in Shippagan; Supreme Court to decide whether it will hear the Forum des maires case.

The Supreme Court will decide today whether it will hear the case of Le Forum des maires de la Péninsule acadienne v. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency in the matter of reinstating four federal positions in Shippagan.

Private Members' Business

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency is the Government of Canada. The Government of Canada is the one not recognizing both official languages in order to help the communities to develop. It is the Government of Canada that continues to go to court. In the meantime, Le Forum des maires de la Péninsule acadienne, an agency without means, has to use its savings to be heard in court and the Federal Court has ruled in its favour. The food inspectors are returning, but the federal government disagrees with the ruling and is appealing.

My colleague, the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, said that the government would like to respect both official languages, but the legislation does not allow it to. Stop appealing. Accept the court decision and the problem is solved. That is why I think it is the government that does not want to act. I have a hard time believing it will accept Bill S-3, because it does not want it. Bilingualism costs too much. I think that is the real issue.

There needs to be a desire to follow through and take the time. We have been waiting for 17 years. It is time for something to happen.
[English]

The government has the responsibility because there are laws in this country about bilingualism. We have two languages and we have to respect both languages and get services in both languages.

If the government continues to go to the appeal court or the Supreme Court saying it does not have any rights, then do not tell me it hopes and wishes for laws it could respect. The government has to respect the court's decision, but that is not what it is doing. I hope that attitude will change.

• (1805)

[Translation]

The Liberal government has always maintained that it recognizes the enforceability of the Official Languages Act, but never gave it any real recognition, because that would result in too many court cases. That is what it is saying. That is ridiculous. It wants legislation, but does not want it to be too good, because this would mean that minority communities would go to court.

Parliament passes legislation but the government does not want it to be strong legislation, because it does not want people to go to court. What is this nonsense? The government made this point on many occasions. If part VII of the Official Languages Act is strengthened, everyone will want to go to court.

If everyone goes to court, that means that there is a big problem. It means that the Official Languages Act was never respected. That is enough. The government has to show the political will to change that.

Today, we heard a group that appeared before our Committee on Official Languages. It was a group of parents, anglophone parents, who support the French language. They told us that they wanted to send their kids to immersion schools.

[English]

They said they want them to go to school to learn French. That is where we are in 2005. As for the people of this country now, when we go into the field, into the community, the majority of people

understand that we need services in both languages in our country. They want to learn French, but we are not giving them the tools to do it, not the schools, not the teachers and, after that, not the follow up.

We had a situation, which I said was a shame, where a francophone was working in a public establishment in Ottawa and was reprimanded because she was speaking French. I can tell my friends in the House that if that is what is happening, what can we expect from an anglophone who worked hard, went to school, learned the French language and sees a francophone being reprimanded because she is speaking her mother tongue language? Why will he want to speak French at the age of 16?

The little bit of English I speak today I learned in Ontario when I moved here. I know this little bit of English today because I had the opportunity to practise it. That is what the English parents were telling me today. They were saying that they do not have that opportunity, that they do not have the tools. If we want the two communities to work together in order for people to speak their own language and learn the other language, then we are going to have to respect that.

Let us look at other countries. They do not fight over language. People learn six languages in some countries, five languages in others; it is a goal to learn different languages. As a Parliament, we have to provide the tools to do it and we will support Bill S-3. It is time to deal with it. It is time the government is forced to deal with it because we have a law in our country and there are two bilingual communities, the English and the French.

[Translation]

Hon. Raymond Simard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Minister responsible for Official Languages and Minister responsible for Democratic Reform, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege for me to take part in the debate today in the House on Bill S-3, an act to amend the Official Languages Act (promotion of English and French).

As members are no doubt aware, I represent the unique riding of Saint-Boniface, Manitoba. This riding has an extremely dynamic francophone community currently experiencing significant development in a minority situation.

From my active involvement in Manitoba's francophone community, I can tell you that I am extremely concerned by the challenges and opportunities this community faces. This subject has held a special interest for me since my arrival in the House. So, it is a pleasure for me to speak on something close to the heart of those I represent.

This bill was presented in the other place by Senator Jean-Robert Gauthier and was adopted by the senators on October 26, 2004. Today, it is being sponsored by my colleague, the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. All the members in the House recognize the commitment of the hon. member, who has worked tirelessly to move the official languages file forward.

The intention of this bill amending the Official Languages Act is to reinforce the equal status of the official languages of Canada and Canada's commitment in this regard.

Mr. Gauthier introduced an initial version of this bill, S-32, on September 19, 2001, in the Senate. Subsequently, Bills S-11 and S-4 were introduced. Each time, the bill made it a little further in the parliamentary process.

The same thing can be said about the government's action with regard to the official languages. Much has changed since the end of 2001. The Minister responsible for the Official Languages has been appointed, the action plan for official languages has been officially unveiled, and the accountability and coordination framework that was part of the action plan, is starting to show results.

The Government of Canada's commitment to linguistic duality is unequivocal. The throne speech of October 5 reaffirms that the government will work to implement the official languages action plan and continue to promote the vitality of official language minority communities.

What then is the nature of that commitment? Section 41 of the Official Languages Act includes a formal statement of the commitment of the Government of Canada: promote linguistic duality and support and assist the development of minority francophone and anglophone communities.

This is a solemn commitment, permanent and visible to all Canadians, because it is formulated not only by the government but by the act itself. Only another act of Parliament could alter that commitment by the federal government.

[English]

How is this commitment to be implemented?

The Official Languages Act provides in section 42 that it is the Minister of Canadian Heritage who is responsible, in consultation with other ministers, for coordinating the implementation by federal institutions.

Furthermore, section 43 of the act sets out the specific mandate of the Minister of Canadian Heritage to take such measures as the minister deems appropriate and "to advance the equality of status and use of English and French in Canadian society".

This mandate, like part VII as a whole, is clearly built upon the principle of advancement of official languages that underlies subsection 16(3) of the charter.

The commitment of the federal government in section 41 and its implementation under section 42, as well as the specific mandate set out in section 43, are very broad. Their realization depends not only on establishing and managing priorities and allocating funds and other available resources. To a large extent, we depend on the cooperation of many other actors, including provincial and territorial governments, private sector enterprises, voluntary organizations and other institutions and associations which do not fall within the legislative and regulatory control of the federal government.

•(1810)

[Translation]

If Bill S-3 were not amended to limit the scope, it could create obligations that would be impossible to meet and would affect our relations with the provinces and territories. This is why, while supporting the underlying principle of Bill S-3, we would like to be

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sure that it will not have the effect of hampering relations with the provinces and territories. The Government of Canada works in close cooperation with the provinces and territories in this regard, and that cooperation must continue.

Clearly, the Government of Canada assumes the commitment set out in part VII of the Official Languages Act, but this does not mean it cannot be proactive. That is why we support the underlying principle to Bill S-3, while wishing to restrict its scope. We must not lose sight of everything that has happened since the first version of this bill was tabled in 2001.

In April 2001, the Prime Minister gave the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs the new mandate to "consider strong new measures that will continue to ensure the vitality of minority official-language communities and to ensure that Canada's official languages are better reflected in the culture of the federal public service."

As a result, on March 12, 2003, the Government of Canada announced that it would be investing \$751 million over five years in an official languages action plan. It also made a commitment, through that action plan, to improve accountability and horizontal management and to provide better support to official language minority communities.

I am pleased to have had this opportunity to speak on Bill S-3. May I express my thanks in closing to Senator Jean-Robert Gauthier for his defence of Canada's official language minority communities over so many years.

•(1815)

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.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

HUMAN RESOURCES

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share concerns, representing one of my constituents from Langley, regarding the compassionate care benefit program.

The compassionate care benefit program started a year ago in January 2004. The brochure reads:

One of the most difficult times anyone can face is when a loved one is dying or at risk of death. The demands of caring for a gravely ill or dying family member can jeopardize the employment of Canadians and the economic security of their families...The Government of Canada believes that, during such times, Canadians should not have to choose between keeping their jobs and caring for their families.

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I have a true story to tell but to respect the confidentiality and privacy of the family I will be using the name Sue. Sue is a 43 year old woman from Langley who has been caring for her 73 year old mother for a number of years now. It is a very close, loving family. Sue was recently diagnosed with terminal cancer and given two to eight weeks to live. Sue is no longer able to care for her mother so her sister left her job and home in Okanagan, British Columbia to come down and care for Sue.

On January 17, Sue's sister and family applied at the EI office for the compassionate care program, which is there to make it possible for family to take care of one another in a situation like this. Sue's family was told that the sister could not qualify for the compassionate care benefit because a sister was not considered family under the legislation. Sue has no husband and no children and, as I said, her sister is her family. The EI staff said that they could not make the assumption that she was family.

Another portion of this compassionate care program says that "other" could also qualify for this, and I will share further on the word "other". The problem with "other" in the legislation is that it was never defined. The EI staff said that they did not have the authority to define "other", and therefore Sue's sister did not qualify for this package.

The family was told no on January 17 and on January 19 they visited our Langley office. On January 20, I sent off a letter to the Minister of Human Resources regarding this urgent matter. On February 2, I personally delivered a copy of that letter to the minister. On February 4, I stood in the House and asked the minister to do something on this. On February 7, I received a response from the minister in which she said that she did not have discretion to help this family.

I have been working with the minister and with this family for about a month now and to this point nothing has happened. We have been told that the minister does not have the discretion. The Library of Parliament has shared that the EI Commission does have the discretion.

I am here today to ask the minister when she will do something. Will she direct the EI Commission to look at this in a timely manner so that the needs of the family can be met and the compassionate care program can truly meet what it is there for?

• (1820)

Hon. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada and the minister and I understand the distress experienced by anyone who has a family member with a serious illness, the sort of case described by my colleague. That is why we are committed to supporting working Canadians to ensure that they are not forced to choose between their jobs and caring for their family during a serious medical crisis.

It is for these very humanitarian reasons that the government introduced the compassionate care benefits program in the year 2004 to help Canadian workers faced by these situations, the program to which my colleague refers.

Research shows the vast majority of Canadians facing these types of crises are caring for a spouse, parent or child. These benefits

ensure that eligible workers can take a temporary leave of absence from work to provide care or support for a gravely ill child, spouse or parent who are at a significant risk of death.

The six weeks of benefits can be shared among family members and can be taken consecutively, concurrently or one week at a time by family members over a 26 week period. This provides families with greater choice so that they will contribute to quality care of gravely ill Canadians.

The six week benefit was found to represent a balanced approach that would meet the needs of Canadian families and establish a sound foundation for the compassionate care benefits.

In determining an appropriate duration for the leave, a variety of evidence was examined, including medical evidence on the duration and cause of grave illnesses, as well as best practices in the public and private sectors.

However my colleague will be glad to know that an evaluation is being conducted in 2005-06 and part of this evaluation will include an assessment of the adequacy and scope of the benefits. As of December 31, 2004, 5,383 workers had filed a claim for compassionate care benefits, an average of 449 a month.

The Canada Labour Code and most provincial and territorial labour codes already provide job protection for workers in this type of situation. Even in those provinces that do not, workers can still receive the federal compassionate care benefit.

Employers recognize the importance of providing a balance between work and family. Of the firms surveyed on this question in 2001, 73% indicated that they did not have to change their practices or operations to accommodate the enhanced leave.

This is a relatively new benefit. It is too early to know if the initial pattern of demand will continue. As I said, we are working to ensure that Canadians are aware of the program. We will work in consultation with the health care community to ensure that patients and their families are aware of the compassionate care benefit, and aware that it is a resource that they can call on.

Evidence based analysis and ongoing monitoring and assessment will ensure the compassionate care benefit responds to the pressures faced by workers caring for a gravely ill family member, such as the tragic case mentioned by my colleague.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, I am not rising in the House today to hear an hon. member read from a brochure. I am here for answers. Dying people cannot wait.

I have some statistics. The annual budget for this program is \$221 million. It has been in operation for one year and only \$7 million of that \$221 million have been spent.

There is a category of “other”. I am asking the minister to define “other”. Is a sister family? Is a brother family? I believe they should be because these are the types of Canadians who are taking care of one another. A sibling is family. The sloppy legislation that we have here where “other” is not defined, needs to be dealt with in a timely fashion, not an hon. member reading from a brochure.

Ministers do have discretion. We have heard that ministers have had discretion to bring strippers into Canada. We have heard that ministers have discretion to fast-track legislation, like trying to undemocratically redefine marriage. We are hearing now that ministers do not have discretion and they will not be dealing with compassionate care in a timely fashion.

I ask the minister to do the right thing, to represent Canada and provide compassionate care so families can stay together.

• (1825)

Hon. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, as my colleague has pointed out, the minister has said that she has no discretion as to who can access the compassionate benefits. The legislation, which is still relatively new and which passed by the House, clearly states that these benefits are open to eligible workers providing care or support to a gravely ill child, spouse or parent who has a significant risk of death.

As I have mentioned, it is still new legislation, but already an evaluation is being conducted and part of that evaluation will include an assessment of the adequacy and scope of the benefits prescribed in the legislation.

I repeat again, I feel strongly personally and as does the minister with respect to the case described by my colleague. He has done fine work on that behalf. We are dealing with a prescription of legislation.

[*Translation*]

IMMIGRATION

Ms. Meili Faille (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of this Parliament, I have asked many questions in this House concerning the federal government's treatment of Mr. Mohamed Cherfi. Both the officials of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration and the minister are still dragging their feet in this case.

In Mohamed Cherfi's case there are several important elements. Mohamed Cherfi is an Algerian who fled his country and sought refuge in Canada. His request for refugee protection was turned down in 1999. He was able to remain here because of a moratorium on the deportation of Algerians. Like his countrymen, Mr. Cherfi lobbied to have his status recognized. It has been his bad luck to become the spokesperson for these people treated so unfairly by Canada.

Faced with such lobbying, the then Minister of Citizenship and Immigration had no other choice but to give in. An amnesty was declared for non-status Algerians, but in a vengeful gesture, their spokesman, Mr. Cherfi, was excluded.

The only solution remaining to him was to hide out in a religious sanctuary. In an unprecedented move, Citizenship and Immigration Canada insisted that the Quebec City police force violate the sanctuary of the Église unie de Saint-Pierre, on Saint-Ursule Street in

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Quebec City. From there, Mr. Cherfi was taken to the American border and ever since, he has been held in the United States.

These actions by Citizenship and Immigration have mobilized the community.

To help Mr. Cherfi return, five upstanding citizens of Quebec, including Marc Ouellet, agreed to sponsor him as a person in need of protection. Mr. Cherfi has a great deal of support in the community in Quebec.

Since he went public with his position on non-status Algerians, the risk to his safety has increased tenfold. He is now perceived as someone who has tarnished Algeria's image abroad.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada promised the sponsoring group it would make its decision quickly so that Mr. Cherfi could return, if possible, before he is deported from the United States.

A coalition was created to support him and his family at every turn.

They have received support from the Civil Liberties Union, the Amnesty International French Canadian chapter, the Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes réfugiées et immigrantes, the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group, the Centrale des syndicats du Québec, the Fédération des femmes du Québec and many others.

I have the following question for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration: why did the Government of Canada not allow Mr. Cherfi to return?

Has his department lost all human sensitivity? Is the presence of a non-status Algerian in Canada, who exercises his freedom of expression, an embarrassment to Canada?

• (1830)

[*English*]

Hon. Hedy Fry (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I think the hon. member is aware, I cannot comment on the specifics of this case or in fact of any other case. Nor do I intend to comment on the U.S. immigration system because Canada is a sovereign nation and like every country is guided by its own domestic immigration laws and regulations.

I can assure the member that all levels of due process are followed in Canada. At the same time, I would like to thank the hon. member for her question which allows me to emphasize the important role Canada plays in providing a safe haven for genuine refugees.

Canada has a long-standing tradition of generosity toward those seeking our protection, people who are fleeing persecution, torture or risk to life in their home countries. Canada has in place one of the most generous refugee determination systems in the world. The principle of fairness, openness and transparency form the core of Canada's refugee protection program.

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To maintain the integrity of this system, it is imperative that once all levels of review have been exhausted, unsuccessful candidates leave Canada when required or they are to be removed. Anyone who wants to live in Canada must go through the appropriate channels. When a visa officer looks at an application, it is processed according to existing, clear and transparent guidelines. Each case is judged and decided on its own merits and on the individual circumstances.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Meili Faille: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that history and the past few months have shown that, in every instance where individuals had church protection, including church sanctuary, their applications were valid. The current minister has approved such applications and granted special status.

In the case of Mr. Cherfi, Citizenship and Immigration Canada violated the sanctuary. Mr. Cherfi enjoys very wide support from various people, people who knew him and well-known community figures.

In fact, Mr. Cherfi has been accused of not working. A man who volunteered so much time to help his people deserves at least to be considered on humanitarian grounds. The work he has done must be taken into consideration. We must not forget that he has made a life for himself here, that he is a part of Quebec's society now and, also, that has a spouse impatiently waiting for him here.

Now, his life is threatened because this matter has caught media attention. We ask the minister to approve his application.

[*English*]

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, church sanctuary is a tradition. We all know that. However, it is not a law. Canada's refugee determination system is a fair and generous one that follows clearly defined processes.

The government is committed to ensuring that our refugee determination system reflects the values of Canadians and that it has their confidence. In cases where there are humanitarian and compassionate grounds, that is again determined on a case by case basis, weighing all of the issues. Therefore, we cannot comment on that individual case or process either. When all avenues of due process have been followed and a final judgment has been made, we expect the individuals to return home.

If a visa officer receives an application for resettlement as a refugee, the officer has an obligation to review it against the standards outlined by the United Nations convention. Our system must continue to provide protection to genuine refugees, but it must also continue to follow clear and transparent due process.

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mr. Bradley Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the people who are viewing us on TV, I will briefly rephrase the question which I am bringing forward again in adjournment proceedings tonight. I put the question to the Minister of Finance, but it was answered by the Deputy Prime Minister, concerning the thousands of RCMP officer vacancies that are across Canada. In my particular case, I was most concerned about the province of Saskatchewan.

I referenced an earlier quote from the current Minister of Public Works which said that \$1 billion would be better spent on the RCMP rather than wasting it on the gun registry. That was an admirable thought.

In the justice committee of the House, the Conservative members of the committee had brought forth the motion to transfer \$56 million from the gun registry to training for the RCMP. The motion was defeated in committee with the support of the Bloc Québécois and the NDP supporting the government. So I put the question to the minister to encourage him to put more resources properly where they should be, to the RCMP.

During the election campaign I ran into eight or nine RCMP officers door knocking and campaigning. If I may say so proudly, they all pledged to vote for me. I asked them, "What do you need, what do you want? Is the government adequately supporting you?"

We find in the province of Saskatchewan that we have severe problems with crime. It is unfortunate that the province has a high murder rate and in particular, the city of Saskatoon has one of the highest which is not something we are proud of. We need more police services to deal with the crystal meth problem and the drug abuse problem. We need more police services to deal with break and enters. I realize that some of this has to do with cities and so forth, but the RCMP needs more resources.

I would go out and talk to the individual members, not in front of the cameras, not for consumption, so that they would tell me face to face what they would say to someone who they were viewing as their potential member and now is their member of Parliament. I would ask, "What do you really need?"

The Mounties told me that they needed more basic equipment. The buildings used by their rural detachments were falling apart. They needed better cars and just the basic equipment to handle their jobs.

They did not need the gun registry. They found it burdensome and a nuisance. In fact, one of the RCMP officers who first questioned me was in civilian dress and questioned me about the gun registry. I of course explained why I was saying it was such a disaster. He said, "Good, because we need that money for more proper and useful things. We have to actually deal with crime in the community and we need money resourced and reallocated. It was not the entire waste of the gun registry that we were asking for but just a portion".

Therefore, my question for the government is, why not take the money and put it into filling these vacancies, and put it into something that the communities and the RCMP rank and file officers are calling for?

I know the parliamentary secretary will recite what the government has done, but the need is so great. The need continues and the need is not met. Irrespective of what the government will claim to have done, there is still a need for more funding. I wish the government would address that by transferring it from waste to proper spending.

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•(1835)

Hon. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP has a long-standing reputation for providing Canadians with policing services at the federal, provincial, territorial and municipal levels in over 750 detachments across the country. The government has made a significant investment in the RCMP on the federal side, as well as by meeting our contracts with the provinces. Indeed, the RCMP is now recognized internationally as a modern, sophisticated police force.

We provide the RCMP with a spending authority of almost \$3 billion. In fact, since 1999-2000, the RCMP's annual spending authority has increased by about \$850 million, from just under \$2 billion to more than \$2.8 billion.

The funding provided permits the RCMP to fulfill its obligations under the various police services agreements. Under these agreements, the provinces are responsible for the appropriate level of policing service in consultation with the commanding officers. The provincial police services agreement includes a cost share formula, 70% provincial, 30% federal.

Since 1999-2000, the RCMP has been authorized to spend an additional \$505 million amount for the provision of contract policing services, an increase on the federal side alone of \$225 million.

For the upcoming fiscal year, we will support the RCMP with additional spending authority of \$88 million and more than 500 new officers for contract policing services. The federal share of this increase is \$33 million, with the remainder being paid by our contract partners.

The RCMP is also a responsible partner with the provinces. The force addresses vacancies in consultation with the provinces and municipalities for detachments across Canada on a continuing basis. In fact, the RCMP is processing requests for more than 180 additional contract officers in Alberta and 142 new municipal police officers in British Columbia. In addition, the RCMP continuously works with provincial governments and municipalities to address resource issues.

In Saskatchewan there are currently 1,100 RCMP members providing contract policing services.

The RCMP is committed to ensuring that necessary resources are available and allocated to fulfill its policing requirements.

As has been previously indicated in this House, the RCMP's Depot Division in Regina, Saskatchewan is training a record number of cadets this year. In comparison with the 586 newly hired RCMP members in 2001-02, the RCMP has hired well in excess of that number of regular members every year since: in 2002-03, 649; in 2003-04, 839; and a total of 850 regular members to be hired in 2004-05.

In addition, the RCMP is currently conducting a review of all recruiting processes to identify strategic improvements to its recruiting program to ensure that the RCMP continues to meet its law enforcement commitments.

There is strong public support from local and national public health and community safety organizations and workers for all aspects of the firearms program. This government is committed to providing the RCMP with the tools it needs to do their work. This speaks directly to the reference to the Canadian Firearms Registry. The registry is an important tool for the RCMP. It queries it on average 2,000 times a day.

The Canada Firearms Centre costs have been coming down for several years. In 2004 the government announced improvement to the firearms program and measures to control costs, with a commitment to the centre's annual funding of approximately \$85 million starting next fiscal year, including a cap of \$25 million on registration related costs. This is half of what the funding of the centre was in 2000-01. In fact, there have been major improvements in terms of the organization of the firearms centre and the firearms program in recent years.

In addition, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and the Canadian Professional Police Association support the licensing of all firearms owners and the registering of all firearms. Indeed, the police association passed a motion in 2004 saying just that.

•(1840)

Mr. Bradley Trost: Mr. Speaker, I heard a lot of numbers over there. I heard a lot of posturing about they had done this and they had done that. I urge the parliamentary secretary to get out there, talk to the rank and file police officers and talk about their needs.

I am a Conservative. I do not like spending money by and large, but there are certain things the government has a need for, and spending for police services is one of them. It is an economical way to spend money. If we cut down on drug use, it will save our health care costs. If we cut down on property crimes, it will allow for more productivity in our economy. This is a wise and prudent use of resources, but spend it to meet the needs.

The government rattles off all these numbers. Talk to the police officers. What do they really need? I have asked those officers. They are not asking for any luxury. They have said that their rural detachments are declining. They have problems with their equipment. They need real resources. They do not need posturing. They do not need statistics.

Hon. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I know it is inappropriate for me to say that the member is a liar and I am not going to say that. However, if he goes out and talks to people and says that the cost of registration is \$1 billion and then asks them what they would do with that \$1 billion, he is going to get a certain response. That is wrong. It is completely wrong and if he listened to the figures, he would know it is wrong.

The firearms registry has never cost \$1 billion. Even in the full 10 years of startup it was nowhere near it. Members heard my figure of \$25 million. If the member gives false information, he is going to get a very different response than if he gave the real information.

The police associations support the registration of firearms.

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The government has also invested \$112 million to fight organized crime, \$100 million to update the criminal record and fingerprint analysis technology, \$34 million to address criminal exploitation of children, and \$27 million for the DNA data bank alone. These are expenditures for law enforcement which help the RCMP and the people the member was talking about.

● (1845)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:45 p.m.)

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