



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Thursday, November 23, 2006**

—  
**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, November 23, 2006

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1000)

[*English*]

### GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE REPORTS

**Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as part of a comprehensive effort to inform parliamentarians and Canadians on the government's performance, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 88th report on performance for 2005-06 on behalf of departments and agencies, as well as an annual report entitled "Canada's Performance The Government of Canada's Contribution".

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### WEAPONS AND MATERIALS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), to lay upon the table, in both official languages, the annual report on Canada's contribution to the global partnership against the spread of weapons and materials of mass destruction.

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### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to eight petitions.

\* \* \*

### CRIMINAL CODE

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-35, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (reverse onus in bail hearings for firearm-related offences).

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

## COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

### PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 22nd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2). This report contains the list of items added to the order of precedence as a result of the replenishment that took place on Tuesday, October 31 under private members' business that should not be designated non-votable.

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2) the report is deemed adopted.

\* \* \*

•(1005)

[*Translation*]

### CRIMINAL CODE

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-385, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (addition to order of prohibition).

She said: Mr. Speaker, currently, the courts cannot prohibit a pedophile from being alone in the presence of a child under the age of fourteen years. I am introducing this bill today in the House of Commons in order to correct this shortcoming so the Criminal Code may be amended to permit the courts to impose such an order of prohibition.

The aim is also to help protect children. This legislative amendment will reduce the risk of repeat offences with regard to individual rights and freedoms.

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

\* \* \*

[*English*]

### PETITIONS

#### LITERACY

**Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am presenting today a petition from the people of Thunder Bay—Rainy River concerned about cuts to literacy and requesting, in a very positive manner, the reinstatement of funding for literacy.

*Business of Supply*

The riding Thunder Bay—Rainy River has 16 municipalities and 11 first nations and these cuts affect all of them. We are asking the government, in its economic statement today, to ensure that literacy is restored to its previous level and, indeed, to go beyond that.

[Translation]

## CANADA LABOUR CODE

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure and honour to table here nearly 1,500 signatures in support of Bill C-257, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (replacement workers). As we know, antiscab legislation can shorten labour disputes, improve the atmosphere in the workplace and provide a balance in means of exerting pressure during negotiations for both management and employees.

[English]

## JUSTICE

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to table in the House today a petition containing hundreds of signatures from my riding of Abbotsford and signatures from across the great province of British Columbia. They have been collected by justice advocate, Gertie Pool.

The petition informs Parliament that citizens wish to see repeat sexual offenders, like Peter Whitmore, kept away from our communities and children. It goes on to say that my private member's bill, Bill C-277, which would increase the maximum sentence for luring a child for sexual purposes over the Internet from 5 to 10 years in prison, would renew faith in the House if passed. Our children deserve no less.

\* \* \*

## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

## BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

## OPPOSITION MOTION—QUEBEC NATION

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ)** moved:

That this House recognize that Quebeckers form a nation.

He said: Mr. Speaker, first, I would like you to know that I will be sharing my speaking time with the member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean.

The motion the Bloc Québécois is putting before the House today will enable parliamentarians to recognize that Quebeckers form a nation. It is the recognition of a simple fact.

We formulated this motion in such a way as to make it acceptable to everyone. We thus did not link the recognition of the Quebec nation to any other consideration. No condition is attached to this recognition. We also did not formulate the motion in such a way as to permit its interpretation to mean recognition of a sovereign nation, which Quebec is not—at least not yet. We are therefore presenting a motion respectful of one and all, without making recognition of the Quebec nation subject to partisan conditions.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister, did the exact opposite. He introduced a motion recognizing the Quebec nation while imposing a condition—a partisan condition. That is absurd. It is clear that the Prime Minister is simply trying to save face. The only respectful approach to take towards Quebeckers is to recognize them for what they are—a nation that does not stop being one when it is no longer part of Canada—clearly, an unconditional nation.

It is not up to the Prime Minister to decide what option Quebeckers will choose. It is not up to one particular party to decide how Quebeckers will choose. The future of Quebec belongs to Quebeckers—period. Quebeckers will decide their own future under the standing orders of the National Assembly.

I repeat. Quebeckers form a nation, not on the condition of their remaining in a supposedly united Canada. They constitute a nation, not on the condition of their forming a country. Those are political options. They are both respectable, because they are both democratic. In neither instance can the existence of the nation of Quebec be predicated on a particular action or option.

We are a nation because we are who we are, whatever future Quebec chooses. The recognition of Quebec as a nation by the House of Commons is more than symbolic, and certainly above partisan politics. For Quebec, there is no other issue more fundamental than this. It is also a fundamental issue for Canada.

The proof of this lies in the very debate taking place here today and across the country, both in Quebec and in Canada, and in the media. It is an issue which is taking up a great deal of energy.

For years, federally elected representatives have wanted to avoid this thorny issue and sweep it under the carpet. Yet the issue resurfaced recently with the adoption of a related motion by the Quebec wing of the Liberal Party of Canada. It also came up following the adoption of an NDP declaration at its convention in September in Quebec City, and yet again following the Bloc's motion and yesterday's motion by the Prime Minister. We cannot ignore this issue when so many people are talking about it, and this is to be expected.

*Business of Supply*

Many commentators and federally elected representatives have dug in their heels and refused to acknowledge this evidence that Quebecers form a nation. Many surveys have found that a large majority of Canadians are not interested in officially recognizing that Quebecers form a nation, neither better nor worse than Canada, but certainly different. This refusal to recognize Quebec for what it is is why Quebec is not a signatory to the Constitution. This refusal to recognize Quebec as a nation is also why Quebec is considered a province, no different than the rest and not as the place that is home to a nation.

• (1010)

By adding his coda to the Bloc Québécois motion, the Prime Minister is trying, clumsily as he put it, to delude Canadians. In the Quebec National Assembly, sovereignists and federalists alike agree that Quebecers form a nation. The motion adopted by the National Assembly in 2003 is respectful of the people of Quebec. I will read it to you. It says, "That the National Assembly reaffirm that the people of Quebec form a nation". This motion was adopted unanimously, by both sovereignists and federalists.

This motion does not subject our identity to one political option or another. If the Prime Minister is acting in good faith when he says he recognizes Quebec as a nation, he will support and vote for the Bloc Québécois motion. If he does not, everyone will know that the Prime Minister sees Quebec as a nation subject to Canada's rule. Everyone will know that his true interest lies in political sparring. If he votes against this motion, which, I would like to remind you, is identical in every respect to the one adopted by the National Assembly, then it is because he does not believe that the Quebec nation is free to decide its own future. If this is the case, then the statement the Prime Minister made yesterday is just empty talk. I hope this is not the case. I hope he will have the courage to openly recognize Quebec as a nation.

Our intention with this motion is to stop elected representatives from sweeping the matter under the carpet and to have them take a stand on this fundamental issue. There is no question of setting conditions on this recognition. It is not a matter of saying that we recognize the Quebec nation as long as Quebec remains in Canada, or of saying that Quebec forms a nation only if it becomes a sovereign country. We are what we are, period. That is all. And that is the question that is being asked.

It turns out that, by introducing this motion, the Bloc Québécois has forced the issue and is making us all look in the mirror.

This morning, there was a range of viewpoints in the Canadian media. Some agreed with the Prime Minister's position. Others are deeply dismayed and saying it is not possible to recognize the Quebec nation.

I urge the members of this House to see this through to the logical conclusion and to free themselves from those psychological barriers that prevent them from recognizing the Quebec nation, simply, without any second thoughts, without any ulterior motives and especially without petty partisanship.

I urge Quebecers to pay close attention to the debate and take note of how each member of this House votes.

• (1015)

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the matter before us today is one of—

[*English*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Victoria is rising on a point of order.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague had risen to ask a question. I do not think you saw him.

[*English*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** I did not see anyone rising, so I will continue with recognizing the hon. member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Michel Gauthier:** Mr. Speaker, the motion before us is clear, simple and straightforward. It says what it says. It says what the members of Quebec's National Assembly, federalists as well as sovereignists, have already said unanimously. It speaks of a fact that no one should contest or think of contesting, and says it so clearly that in my view there is no room for interpretation or ill-conceived amendments involving any kind of conditions.

Quebeckers are rather surprised this morning to see that, in this House, the Conservative government and some members from Quebec did not spontaneously agree to recognize that Quebec and Quebecers form a nation.

The Prime Minister tried yesterday to introduce his own motion, bringing in partisan political considerations, referring to the federalism option and the sovereignty option, saying that it means inside a united Canada. The government's behaviour in this matter is so astonishing that I would like to take the liberty of explaining something to you.

I am the second-longest-serving House leader in the history of Canada's Parliament. Usually when there is a minister's statement, the government sends it to the opposition. The reason for this is easy to understand: it enables the opposition parties to react to a statement made in the House. Every time a minister has made a statement in this House, the content has been transmitted in advance, whether several hours, 15 minutes, or even just 10 or 12 minutes in advance. But yesterday, something exceptional happened in this House and I would like to raise it in today's debate.

For the past 13 years, the government has always given the opposition a copy of statements by the Prime Minister. For probably the first time in history, that copy was a fake, a statement that did not contain the most important element in the Prime Minister's remarks, about which all the media in Canada are talking today, in other words, his motion.

The Prime Minister has insulted not only the Bloc Québécois and the other parties in this House, but all Quebecers. The people of Quebec are humiliated. I see that the Minister of Transport, a Quebec member, seems to find it funny that his Prime Minister and his government deceived the entire population of Quebec, by deceiving their representatives with a sneaky little trick.

*Business of Supply*

For the first time in this House, because the matter at issue was Quebec and the Quebec nation, the government sent a truncated and misleading statement that did not contain the essence of what the Prime Minister was going to state in the House. I leave it to Quebecers to judge this government's tactics. Not so long ago, we had the "night of the long knives", when Quebec was betrayed during the constitutional discussions. We have just experienced a black afternoon, an afternoon where the representatives of Quebec and the people of Quebec were deliberately deceived by the Prime Minister of Canada, whom I accuse of having sent us a faked version of his statement.

Nothing can justify the use of techniques like this. As parliamentarians of all shades of political allegiance, we should be able to discuss issues honestly and openly, and to judge motions like ours on their merits. That is how a parliament should function.

• (1020)

We should be entitled to some measure of openness from the government, from members from other parts of Canada and especially from members from Quebec who are part of the government, some interest in discussion, comparing ideas and working objectively together to do justice to the people of Quebec. It appears however that this is not possible.

The Conservative government has behaved in exactly the same way as the previous Liberal government when Jean Chrétien plotted behind Quebec's back. This is absolutely outrageous. Will someone tell me why we in the House cannot simply say what we think about such a clear motion, "That this House recognize that Quebecers form a nation". Why is it so difficult to speak about this motion?

In closing, I would like to amend this motion as follows:

I move, with the consent of the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie and seconded by the member for Pointe-de-l'Île, the following amendment:

That the motion be amended by adding after the word "nation" the following:  
"currently within Canada"

With this amendment, the motion would then read as follows:

That this House recognize that Quebecers form a nation currently within Canada.

• (1025)

**The Deputy Speaker:** I must inform hon. members that, pursuant to Standing Order 85, the amendment to the opposition motion can only be moved with the consent of the party who moved the motion. As a result, I ask the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie whether he consents to this amendment.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** Mr. Speaker, the last time I said that, it committed me for a long time.

I consent.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We have his consent, not surprisingly.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food and the Minister Responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board for questions and comments.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, does my colleague recognize

that a majority of Quebecers would like a fresh start in our country, Canada?

People like me have chosen to go into politics simply to express their desire for real change in their life, in their future, for their children. Enough talking through our hats, enough posturing. On January 23, Quebec and Canada reconciled. Yesterday, I was proud to be a Quebecer and proud to be Canadian. Finally, for my parents, for my generation, for my children, I can see the light at the end of the tunnel.

**Mr. Michel Gauthier:** Mr. Speaker, no one is questioning the member's right to believe what he wants, how he wants, to express his ideas, to debate here in Parliament, to question me, to react, to comment, to make statements or to go back to earlier remarks. No one is stopping him doing that.

Does declaring that Quebecers form a nation prevent the member from making statements, holding forth, arguing his points of view and defending an option?

It is a matter of fact, and the members of Quebec's National Assembly, federalists and sovereigntists alike, unanimously admitted that Quebecers constitute a nation. Is the member telling us that this simple statement prevents him from living, flourishing or expressing his points of view?

On the contrary, the member should rejoice at seeing Canada's House of Commons follow the lead of Quebec's National Assembly and recognize a fact that is in any case almost universally recognized, that Quebecers form a nation. I fail to see how that in any way impinges on his political opinions. On the contrary, we should debate this matter without trying to dismiss one option or insert another, as his leader, the Prime Minister, is trying to do.

The debate on Quebec's sovereignty or Canada's unity will take place when Quebecers decide to put this question back on the table. However, we are not putting a motion before the House today that discusses that.

We are asking the members of this House to tell us simply, frankly, honestly, sincerely, based on their own feelings and cultural background, if, yes or no, Quebecers form a nation. It is simple to understand and I do not understand why the member feels so uncomfortable about debating the question.

• (1030)

[English]

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, to my hon. colleagues across the way, as a Canadian and as a parliamentarian, I truly would love to converse with them in our other official language of this Parliament. It is impossible for me to do that in a coherent fashion. It is a part of my growth that I must go through as a parliamentarian in the future.

Having said that, I feel that we are debating issues here that speak to the reality of the situation in Canada. I think both motions that have been brought forward in this House speak to reality. Quebec is a nation within a unified Canada. That is the reality of where we are today in 2006. Certainly, the amendment that the Bloc has brought forward speaks to reality as well.

I feel that the debate on the abstract issues of a nation is important as well. I think we need to discuss that to understand much better how nationhood represents it with people, language, culture and history, and this is an arena where we can make those choices.

Does my hon. colleague not agree that the reality of what we are dealing with right now is the most important thing in this debate in this Parliament?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Michel Gauthier:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his comment. Indeed, based on our knowledge of history and the cultural elements that make each of us the person we are, based on realities and clear definitions found in the dictionary, based on a reality that is both historical and geographical and social, quite simply, without any dirty tricks, without trying to change the nature of the debate, without moving it on to another stage—a stage we are not currently at—we should be able to talk, observe and tell Quebecers that we feel that they form a nation.

We see no objection. It poses no problem for us. We feel that if it were not for a kind of pathological obsession typical of some people in this House and which was illustrated, yesterday, by the Prime Minister, who tried, by a kind of motion, to add to the Bloc's motion the idea of a political debate on the future of Canada, this could be simple.

Why is it not that simple? Why is it not that clear? Why did the Prime Minister try to change things? Why are we not able, you and I, with the Speaker, in accordance with the Standing Orders, to discuss this question simply and in all fairness to Quebecers? I think that to ask the question is to answer it. Those who wish to transform this debate in order to take it to another level are, in my opinion, making a serious mistake.

• (1035)

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, despite my youth, I too have had the privilege of serving in the National Assembly with the member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean and with the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie on the councils of two different municipalities and now here in the House of Commons. I would mention that I have also heard things which have surprised me in the course of my career. However, I have to say that the motion the Bloc Québécois is asking us to support today, even in an amended form, will remain in my experience as one of the most memorable interventions I have ever heard.

Here we have a political party devoted exclusively and obsessively to the cause of Quebec's separation from Canada asking Canada's Parliament to acknowledge that it is on the right track. The leader of the Bloc is, in a way, calling for a resolution on clarity. Indeed the political about-face is pretty spectacular, even for the Bloc.

Here is what one of the co-founding leaders of the independence movement is asking of Parliament. "Who would you allow us to be?" "What do you want us to become?" No member from Quebec having earned the privilege of sitting here has ever felt the need to ask his peers why he was here. Not Papineau, not Cartier, not Laurier, not Trudeau, not Mulroney nor any other Quebec leader has ever asked his provincial counterparts, "Who am I?"

### *Business of Supply*

No. They have each said in turn at various points in time, "This is who we are, this is what we want for ourselves and what we can do together for our fellow citizens".

[*English*]

I doubt that anybody in a Canadian Parliament ever said to the representatives from Lower Canada, from eastern Canada or from the province of Quebec, that this is who they are and that this is how we will recognize them from now on.

[*Translation*]

Since 1792, when Canada's first Parliament met in Quebec, right up to the present, we have been called first Canadians, then French Canadians and now Quebecers. It was not other people who named us, however. We have never asked our partners in the other provinces who we are.

I myself have no problem recognizing that Quebecers form a nation, since we share a common language, culture and history.

I have already said so and I have no difficulty saying it again today. I am, as an Irish Quebecer, very proud to belong to the Quebec nation as are thousands of other Quebecers from backgrounds other than that of the majority. I am, however, just as proud of my Canadian citizenship. These feelings are not contradictory. In fact, I think the Quebec nation the Bloc is so keen to celebrate would not perhaps exist today had French culture and language and our legal institutions not been protected in our various Constitutions. The surest guarantee of the continued growth of the Quebec nation is our participation within Canada as a whole.

The Prime Minister clearly understood it when he asked us to support it a motion recognizing that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada. Those four little words "within a united Canada" contain our entire history as a society, as a people and, yes, as a nation. We will soon be celebrating the 400th anniversary of the founding of Quebec City, the place where I was born and the city where past generations of Cannons and Powers, my ancestors, were able to make their dreams and aspirations come true.

• (1040)

I sincerely hope that this anniversary will remind all Canadians, wherever they come from, that, for four centuries now, successive generations of French-speaking men and women founded a country here, in America, a country that still allows them to tell the world about pride and solidarity. They not only asked others for recognition, they built a country in their own image, with the sweat of their brow, that reflects the scope of their ambition. This country is still their country and it will remain so as long as there are francophones in America.

It is true that, at times, Quebecers have suffered under a kind of paternalistic, even antagonistic, federalism, but the Prime Minister has proved that he wanted to and has been able to bring in a new, open federalism that would allow the Quebec nation to express its rich personality and bring all its potential to the fore in a respectful relationship with our partners. That is not what the Bloc Québécois wants.

*Business of Supply*

Not long ago, another Conservative Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney, poured his heart and soul into the recognition of Quebec as a distinct society within Canada. After years of heroic efforts, that recognition was never achieved. And whom do we find among the people who sabotaged the Meech Lake accord? The future founding father of the Bloc Québécois, Lucien Bouchard, who was consistent enough to go to Quebec City and take over the helm of the Parti Québécois. Then there was Jacques Parizeau who did everything he could, along with Bernard Landry, to tear down Brian Mulroney's government. They did it for the same reason that the current leader of the Bloc Québécois is doing it. The sovereignists fear one thing above all—that the Quebec nation will become stronger within Canada. But it is the nation itself that chose its future, and that is why, in both of the referendums run by the supporters of separation, a majority of Quebecers chose to remain in Canada, in their own country.

When René Lévesque's Parti Québécois was elected 30 years ago, it was first and foremost because it promised better government, not immediate separation. We cannot criticize a citizen of a nation for being a nationalist. Like a majority of my francophone constituents no doubt, I consider myself a nationalist. Nationalism does not mean separatism. We can love Quebec without wanting to destroy Canada. This is why the majority of Quebecers, when they felt that their place in Canada was threatened, wanted to uphold and affirm it. Of course, Quebecers have elected Péquiste governments and Bloc members in the past, but they have never given up their place in Canada, the country that they dreamed of and created and that they continue to improve.

As the Prime Minister said yesterday, we must not mistake the real intent of the leader of the Bloc Québécois and his members, which is to recognize not what Quebecers are, but what the sovereignists would like them to be. To them, "nation" means "separation" and that is that.

The Quebec National Assembly recently reaffirmed that the people of Quebec form a nation. The Prime Minister of Canada has just done so, and I hope every member of this House will do so as well by supporting his motion.

How can we forget the dignified, reasonable and resolute attitude of Robert Bourassa, whom I had the honour of serving, along with the hon. member for Westmount—Ville-Marie, when he said, at an extremely critical and important moment in our history:

—whatever is said or done, Quebec is today and for all times a distinct society, free, capable of assuming its destiny and its development.

● (1045)

Giving a name to things is not what is most important. We recognize those who contribute to Quebec society by what they achieve. Quebecers want action and accomplishment, not words and declarations.

The Bloc Québécois, which wants to plunge us into yet another existential debate, has been around since 1990. What concrete, lasting achievements has it been able to deliver to Quebecers since then? How has it advanced the Quebec nation it claims to serve and represent? It has done nothing because it can do nothing but talk.

Of course, it has provoked major debates like this one, but has it passed a single piece of legislation in this House? Seen a bill through? The answer is no, of course, because the Bloc does not form the government and never will. Conversely, in only a few months, Canada's new government has addressed almost all of the major priorities announced during the election.

Above all we have opened the way to a better future for the Quebec nation by defining a new federalism of openness, which is already bearing fruit. We are working on eliminating the fiscal imbalance, a topic that the Bloc has enjoyed going on about for years. But is it the Bloc that will be solving the problem of the fiscal imbalance? No, it's the current government that will be doing it.

We have made it possible for Quebec to participate fully in the work of UNESCO, something Quebec has wanted for a long time.

We have made a commitment to respect the spirit of the Canadian Confederation faithfully by respecting the division of provincial and federal powers. We will be putting an end to abuse of the federal spending power.

The Bloc denounces, and tries to bring down, all governments that do not advocate separation, but our government is maintaining sustained and productive relations with the Quebec government, relations that are resulting in agreements and achievements.

Division has never helped the Quebec nation. "Let us cease our fratricidal fighting" said the great Honoré Mercier more than a century ago. He wanted to unite all Quebecers, blue, red or whatever, so that the only French society in the Americas could forge ahead.

In conclusion, I urge the leader of the Bloc Québécois to think about everything that we could accomplish as a nation within a united Canada if we stopped tearing ourselves apart like this.

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, when I hear the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities talk about his government's respect for areas of jurisdiction, what comes immediately to mind is that in Nairobi a week ago, when an area of shared jurisdiction, the environment, was under discussion, Canada's Environment Minister had six days to ramble on but denied Quebec 45 seconds. I can tell the minister, this kind of sharing she can keep.

What I would like to ask is this: how can the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities say right off the bat that this Bloc resolution is just about the most appalling thing he has ever seen during his time in Parliament, and in the same paragraph mention Brian Mulroney, whose efforts to get recognition for the Quebec nation and a context in which the people of Quebec would be respected and given consideration within the Canadian Confederation took several years of work in this Parliament? So it is hard to see the subject as one that it is absolutely astonishing to see raised in this House, given that the previous Conservatives devoted many debates to it.

But the minister had this to say, and I clearly heard it. I am quoting from memory, but I am pretty sure this is what he said. "I personally have no problem accepting the fact that the House recognizes that Quebecers form a nation."



*Business of Supply*

Given that, I want to ask him a tiny question, and we will see how serious he was. Should we then assume that he will vote in favour of the motion? My second question is the following. He told us that he feels that the motion presented yesterday by the Prime Minister saying “within a united Canada” reflects reality. The motion that was amended today says this:

That this House recognize that Quebeckers form a nation currently within Canada.

Does he feel that this motion represents the reality today and that we, the Québécois, form a nation and that we are currently within Canada? Then I say to the minister, given these circumstances, he should support our motion, and I ask him to say so clearly.

● (1050)

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon:** I thank my colleague for his question. This calls for a bit of history. On November 15, Quebec’s sovereigntist forces celebrated 30 years—30 years of existence, 30 years of political discussion. So when my colleague asks me to recognize reality, I firmly believe that the resolution that the Prime Minister of Canada tabled yesterday is a recognition of reality.

On two occasions, Quebeckers, by referendum, said no to the proposal for a sovereign Quebec. Four other times, during three elections in Quebec, the federalist forces won, and during the election that brought Mr. Parizeau to power, we should recall that the Liberals got the most votes.

That means—thank you to the Leader of the Opposition for correcting me—that on six occasions, Quebeckers recognized reality. The resolution that the Prime Minister tabled is thus the reflection of the reality that we currently live in. According to the latest straw poll the voters of Quebec say “Canada is where we belong”.

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I will ask the minister a brief question.

If by chance, the Prime Minister’s resolution was adopted, if reality was turned around and another province left Canada, such as Prince Edward Island or Newfoundland and Labrador, would Quebec cease to be a nation?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon:** Mr. Speaker, here is what I was trying to explain. And I thought it was fairly obvious. For decades now, Canadians, French Canadians, Quebeckers themselves have defined themselves as they were, as they are. They have not asked the Canadian Parliament to define who they are, what their make-up is, and so forth. They know.

Every time we have tried to do it, who are the ones who have clearly tried to throw up roadblocks. Who? It was the sovereigntist movement in Quebec—in Quebec City; here, it was always the case.

The ones who tried to hamper the evolution of Canadian federalism, who tried to get something out of it, were none other than my friends across from me, it is they who, each time, invoked the humiliation of Quebeckers or other arguments that did not hold water. In fact, they are the champions of the status quo. That is what they are.

On our side, we want to see Canadian federalism evolve, because we believe that federalism is the best political arrangement and the best thing for Quebeckers. In fact, Quebeckers chose us: they chose us six times.

● (1055)

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I fully respect the opinion, the option put forward by the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. I am not challenging it, it is his option; it is not mine. In my opinion, the two options are respectable and democratic and we must respect them.

When he said that we are the first ones to want to affirm that we are a nation, he is forgetting that Mulroney and Bourassa were actually the first. “Those lengthy negotiations”, was how it was put. He is leaving a bit out. As to whether the sovereigntists should take most of the blame for the failure of Meech, in my opinion, we could debate this for a long time, but that is not our purpose here today.

Today, we are saying that Quebeckers form a nation. The minister says he recognizes this. And we are amending the motion by adding “currently within Canada” after the word “nation”. That is reality. It does not assume that we will always be part of Canada, but nor does it deny that we may always be part of Canada. This is exactly what Bourassa said, free to choose.

I fail to see how the minister can vote against recognizing a nation in Canada’s current context, a regime he currently prefers, never mind that it was the Bloc Québécois that submitted the proposed amendment. It is his right. It is his right at present.

How can he vote against the motion? What more does this motion need for people to vote for it? How does it differ from the Prime Minister’s motion? Where is the difference?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon:** Mr. Speaker, I must remind the Leader of the Opposition that at present, there is no chance that his motion as amended will become reality.

There is a federalist political party in Quebec City, right? It has been there for the last six elections. This is why I am returning to this subject. Even if the leader of the Bloc Québécois plays some dirty tricks, the fact remains that tomorrow morning, Quebeckers will not vote in favour of his motion, thinking that maybe they are part of Canada and maybe they are not.

His motion says “maybe, maybe not”. Our motion says that Quebeckers form a nation within a united Canada. This is what we are saying and it is reality. It does not say that maybe they will still be part of Canada in a few years or maybe they will not. That is the Bloc’s real intention. I am pleased that they moved this amendment today because essentially they are telling us exactly what is behind their motion. That is what they are telling us.

*Business of Supply*

In closing, let us recall the Bélanger-Campeau Commission. This exercise was conducted with the utmost respect for Quebecers' dignity. I was in Quebec City as was my fellow member from Westmount—Ville-Marie. Two options were presented to Quebecers: continue to evolve within Canadian federalism or propose sovereignty association. The sovereigntist leader in Quebec City decided to remove the hyphen between "sovereignty" and "association." The sovereigntists even repudiated what they had done in the Bélanger-Campeau Commission. They even repudiated that. What is their real intention? Now we see.

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as a Quebecer and a Canadian, I am proud to rise in this House today on the matter of the Quebec nation and Canadian unity. It is a matter that lies at the very heart of Quebec's identity. Clearly it is a matter of great importance. In my opinion, a people's identity must never be the subject of political games. Unfortunately, that is the very intent of the Bloc.

We must ask ourselves why, in November 2006, the Bloc Québécois has put this motion before the House of Commons. What would prompt a sovereignist party to put such a motion before the House of Commons? I think this is worth thinking about.

The Bloc Québécois has never hidden the fact that it openly seeks Quebec's separation. Now it is asking the House of Commons, representatives from all across Canada, to recognize Quebec as a nation. Permit me to say that the situation is rather ironic. Quebecers know very well who they are. They know their history well.

Earlier on, my colleague from Pontiac recalled the time when we sat together under the leadership of Mr. Bourassa, who had stated very clearly that Quebec was a distinct society capable of making its own choices. Why is the Bloc asking all the representatives of the people of Canada here to pass this motion? The fairly obvious conclusion is that by tabling this motion the Bloc Québécois is simply trying to create division among us here in the House of Commons. It is pretty clear. It is another trick to try to cast us in an unfavourable light and then proclaim to Quebec and Quebecers that Canada's parliamentarians did not want to accept the fact. This seems obvious to me. This is the Bloc's only reason. If it is not the case, why is a sovereignist party that wants Quebec to separate asking the House of Commons to define Quebecers? It makes no sense.

May I remind members that this is the same party that in 1995 voted against the distinct society within Canada. Let us be clear: the ideology of the Bloc Québécois, and the Bloc is explicit about this, is purely and simply Quebec separation, full stop. While the leader of the Bloc Québécois always says that Canada can continue to function as it wishes, it is obvious that Quebec is part of Canada. When he brings in motions that seek to divide the people, I have to conclude that he does not want Canada to function well.

● (1100)

I consider that the Bloc is playing a very dangerous game, and one that leads nowhere. The Bloc tried to set a trap for the other parliamentarians. By chance, its own foot has been caught. There are seasoned parliamentarians in this House. There are specialists in parliamentary strategy, I would even say in parliamentary tactics. That is exactly what the Bloc tried to pull, but it has not succeeded.

Essentially, by attempting to take control of this debate, the Bloc members are trying once again to make out that they are the only ones defending Quebec's interests. I really cannot hear that said one more time in this House. I have been hearing it for over 10 years. They dare to say when they get up in this House to defend some issue or other, some program or piece of legislation, "We are acting in the name of Quebecers". Excuse me, but I am a Quebecer too. The member for Bourassa is a Quebecer, the member for Pontiac is a Quebecer. By what right do they make this preposterous assertion? It has been the same story ever since the Bloc started sitting in the House of Commons. It thinks it speaks for almost 7 million Quebecers, but that is not so.

There are federalists in this House who also represent Quebecers. The Bloc has trouble accepting that there are federalists here who defend the interests of Quebec, but who are also committed to promoting Quebec as a part of our great country. That is the fundamental difference.

The Bloc members may find it hard to believe, but there are federalists in the Quebec National Assembly as well. I was one, and my colleague from Pontiac was another, and today the Liberal Party of Quebec is leading the province, a federalist party that defends the interests of Quebec while promoting Canada.

The Bloc should perhaps admit this reality: there are a number of people who as elected representatives speak for segments of the Quebec population and care about Canada. I realize that the Bloc may also have difficulty accepting that there are federalists within my own party, the Liberal Party of Canada, who also care about defending Quebec's interests within Canada.

I cannot pass over in silence the fact that this motion that has popped up in November 2006, as if by chance, follows the debate that is currently taking place in Quebec within my own political party. So I would really like to ask the members of this House not to forget that the rank and file of the Liberal Party of Canada in Quebec are really the ones who opened this debate. In my party, we have never shied away from debating important issues and new ideas, with a view to finally reaching consensus.

● (1105)

This is truly the sign of a party that is listening to its rank and file, and that rank and file comes from all parts of Quebec.

This morning, I would like to pay tribute to these men and women of the Liberal Party of Canada in Quebec who were courageous enough in recent weeks to put this debate on the nation at centre stage again. It took nerve. They did it and they deserve some credit today. I think these Quebec federalists have demonstrated that this is an important issue that can help us continue to modernize our federation and make Canada a more united country. They listened to people from all parts of Quebec in their consultations and they raised the issue. They reached out.

What do all these Quebec federalists have in common? It is what Canada represents to them. They legitimately expressed the attachment that a majority of Quebecers feel for Canada, in their daily lives and in their hearts.

*Business of Supply*

The founders of our country sought to create a land where two languages and a number of cultures and religions can peacefully coexist. I firmly believe in the presence of francophones in Canada; because of their attachment to their language and culture and Quebecers' determination to defend their identity, this country has learned to appreciate differences. Not only to appreciate and respect them but indeed to celebrate them. It is because of the French fact in Canada, Quebecers who have defended their identity, that this country is open to other cultures. We now welcome people from all over the world to our country and accept them as citizens. Now other countries look at us and wonder how we have achieved this success in Canada.

In my opinion, the greatest contribution of francophones and Quebecers is that this country is now open to all cultures and dimensions. This is why our country is so original compared to others around the world and why all eyes are on us.

It is fairly clear that the Bloc is trying to question everything we have achieved over the years. Yet the federalists in Quebec went through two referendums. Never mind the ambiguity of the question. I campaigned during these two referendums. I must say that when we went door to door during the last referendum—and I am sure the members from Bourassa and Pontiac would say the same thing—and tried to explain this issue to people, some Quebecers said, "We will vote yes, but we will always be Canadian citizens".

It was mass confusion. Yet, the outcome was no both times. Why did people vote no twice? Why are the Bloc and the Parti Québécois asking us to choose between our two identities? I am a proud Quebecer and a proud Canadian. Why ask us to choose between our identities? Why?

•(1110)

The answer was "no thanks". No thanks: we are proud to have a number of identities. I am a proud Montrealer, a proud Quebecer and a proud Canadian.

The members of the Bloc have always had trouble accepting this reality. They continue to refuse to admit that, for the majority of Quebecers, Canada is a country with a future, a country they still intend to keep building. For me, it is very clear that Canada would not be what it is today without Quebec, and conversely, Quebec would not be what it is without the participation of other Canadians in this collective project.

I think of my experience since entering politics. I will always remember that, before I did so, the Quebec Justice Minister at the time, Herbert Marx, told me that if I decided to enter politics, I would have to move ideas forward step by step. When you try to rush things and not let them proceed at their own pace, that is when you may fail. That is what is happening. Step by step, we are advancing Canada's recognition of the place of Quebec.

I arrived in federal politics, in this very House, in 1995. You may have been there, Mr. Speaker. I think you were, because you have a lot of experience as an MP. At that time we voted in this House to the effect that the people of Quebec are a distinct society within Canada. Let us not be surprised that the Bloc once again, naturally, voted against.

I recall that under the leadership of the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard, we took action on many issues to recognize Quebec's difference. Quebec had the opportunity to introduce its own parental leave, and we recognized the innovative initiative of the Quebec day care system. First and foremost, there was the desire—and I want to salute the very firm resolution shown at that time by the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard who was then Prime Minister—to record in an agreement the concept of asymmetrical federalism in this country.

We can see that this is being done step by step. The hon. member for LaSalle—Émard even said, in response to the leader of the Bloc during the leaders' debate, that he had always recognized that Quebec was a nation.

What is happening today? Why has the Bloc tabled this motion? That is really the question we should be asking ourselves, and we must not fall into the trap. I repeat that I am proud that the rank and file members of the Liberal Party of Canada have been bold enough to bring this debate back to the forefront. I am proud to see that the federalist parliamentarians of this House have not fallen into the trap set by the Bloc Québécois. But above all, as a Quebecer, I am very proud to see that my parliamentary colleagues from all across the country are prepared to recognize the distinctiveness of Quebec. Truly, this warms the hearts of all Quebecers.

For this reason, I ask the Bloc to accept the following subamendment to the amendment that has been tabled.

•(1115)

Therefore, pursuant to Standing Order 85, if the sponsor of the motion will consent, I move: "That the amendment be amended by deleting the word 'currently' and by adding the words 'a united Canada' after the word 'within'."

**The Deputy Speaker:** It is my duty to inform hon. members that pursuant to Standing Order 85 an amendment to an opposition motion may be moved only with the consent of the sponsor of the motion.

Therefore, does the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie consent to the amendment being moved?

•(1120)

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** Mr. Speaker, would you please reread it?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The subamendment reads as follows: That the amendment be amended by deleting the word 'currently' and by adding the words 'a united Canada' after the word 'within'.

Do you agree?

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** I would agree, Mr. Speaker, if the member's subamendment read "currently within a united Canada", because that is the current reality and it does not dispense with either option. Both options are respected.

I would agree to including the word "united" if we say "currently within a united Canada". I am prepared to agree to that. It respects what we have in Quebec because in Quebec, nobody can deny that there are two options. I respect theirs just as I believe they respect ours. If the member were to move that subamendment, I would accept it immediately and we would have unanimity in this House.

*Business of Supply*

**The Deputy Speaker:** The word “currently” does not appear in the subamendment.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** If she agrees to include it, I would have no problem accepting the subamendment.

**The Deputy Speaker:** In my opinion, the sponsor of the motion does not consent to the subamendment. Therefore, pursuant to Standing Order 85, the subamendment cannot be moved at this time.

The hon. member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean.

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, things have moved quickly in this House, but I would have liked an opportunity for debate with the hon. member.

I have the feeling that adding the concept of “united Canada,” as the leader of the Bloc agreed to, could have settled it. Still, since you say there was no consent, I will return to the essence of the member’s remarks.

I am astonished by something I have just heard. The hon. member said that when her party formed the government, it submitted the question of a distinct society here, in this House, and voted on it. She was proud of that. Yet, in the same breath, she condemned the Bloc Québécois motion asking that the question of nationhood be submitted to the attention of this House.

First, I am having trouble understanding something. Why is it that, when the Liberal Party submits the question of a distinct society, it does not cause division, but when the Bloc talks about a nation, that causes division and is wrong?

Second, she says that the Bloc Québécois is divisive and is not entitled to bring such a matter before Parliament. I find that very intolerant.

And yet, a colleague in her own party, the hon. member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, raised this issue publicly during the leadership race, and the issue has been widely debated within the Liberal Party. But today, we must listen forlornly to someone saying that we are not entitled to submit this question.

If I understand the member correctly, it is appropriate for the Liberal Party to ask Parliament whether it wants to vote for a distinct society or not. However, the Bloc is not entitled to ask for a vote on recognition or non-recognition of a nation. It is fine for the Liberal Party to talk about a nation; but it is despicable when the Bloc Québécois raises the issue. I am having trouble following the logic.

• (1125)

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard:** Mr. Speaker, I never said that the Bloc Québécois was not entitled to present any motion whatsoever before this House. I merely questioned the motivation. Why would a party that calls itself sovereignist, that wants Quebec to separate, choose to seek the approval of all parliamentarians from across Canada? It seems rather ironic. This appears to be another gimmick, which is why I really asked the question. What is the motivation behind all this? The hon. member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean is now suddenly quoting one of our candidates. I feel justified in saying this is what they are trying to do: they are seeking to divide the federalist forces in this House. They were mistaken to think that we would not vote together on a motion that would recognize Quebecers as a nation within a united Canada. That is exactly

what happened. It does not take a genius to figure this out, especially since the hon. member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean is a specialist in parliamentary strategies. We must give him credit. He is a brilliant strategist and loves this. He knows all the standing orders of this House. He thought he could make the Liberal Party of Canada look bad. Well, he was wrong.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am not a Quebecker, but I am proud to be a Canadian who has lived everywhere in Canada. I have spent a great deal of time in Quebec. For 30 years, I was willing to sacrifice my life in the service of the Canadian Forces for all Canadians. This includes Canadians in Quebec. I became attached to Quebec because it is a part of my life and I feel this is a privilege, just as Alberta is part of the Bloc leader’s life, if he chooses to enjoy that privilege. I am not prepared to give up this attachment and this privilege in the name of separation, nor will I ever be.

[*English*]

Would my hon. colleague from Westmount—Ville-Marie agree that Canada and all parts of Canada are indivisible as part of what makes us all Canadians, and that all Canadians have a right to input on our future together as Canadians from coast to coast to coast?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard:** Mr. Speaker, as I said, most of the people who believe in this country in my home province are proud Quebecers and proud Canadians. If we look at this country’s history, there are many examples of Quebecers who helped build the country we know today and who want to continue to do so. At the same time, and this is not contradictory, they want their distinctness and specificity recognized. They also want to continue to share common values and build this country together. These desires are not at odds with one another. It is the same thing when we speak of Quebecers taking pride in having two identities. There is nothing contradictory about this.

The hon. member said that he had lived in Quebec. Everyone will agree not only that most Quebecers have a distinct culture and language, but also that over the years we have become a very inclusive society, like Canada, welcoming thousands of immigrants, and we have developed unique institutions. Even though Quebecers and Canadians share a way of thinking and a set of social values, Quebecers as a whole have developed even stronger ones.

I will always remember that, when this Parliament and the then Liberal government decided not to participate in the war on Iraq, Canadians everywhere applauded, but Quebecers applauded even louder. When we signed the Kyoto protocol, Canadians everywhere applauded, but Quebecers applauded even louder. Ask any immigrant who settled in Quebec and who is now a Canadian citizen how much he feels a part of Quebec and Canadian society. This is what we are trying to achieve together, unlike the Bloc Québécois, which is trying to divide Quebecers.

*Business of Supply*

• (1130)

**Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have not been in this chamber for a while. This was not my fault. I do not think I could have chosen a better day to come back.

I would like to ask a question of my colleague of many identities. Why is the motion introduced by the Bloc Québécois a trap when I read in the newspapers—I was not in the House but I did read the papers—that the Quebec wing of the Liberal Party of Canada wants the entire Liberal Party to recognize Quebec as a nation and has even found an opportunity to make it official? I was happy to read this. How is the Bloc's motion today dividing us? How is it a trap? I would like an answer from the hon. member.

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard:** Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I am glad that the member for La Pointe-de-l'Île is with us. I know that she has gone through a difficult time, but she is a fighter, and that is why she is here with us today. I am very happy to see her.

Although I have a great deal of respect for her, in my opinion, the Bloc clearly wanted to take advantage of the debate within my own political party, knowing full well that we will hold our convention in Montreal in one week's time and that this issue will be discussed and different ideas will be expressed.

The Bloc wanted to take advantage of this situation to make the federal Liberals uncomfortable. But the opposite is happening today. I even wonder whether I should thank the Bloc for giving us an opportunity to unite in this House and recognize this reality of Quebec within our Canada.

**Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will not get lost in the maze of amendments, subamendments and political games for the time being. In fact, I am very proud to stand today and speak in favour of a strong Quebec nation within Canada. That is the reality. Quebec is part of Canada at present. The NDP and I will continue to fight to keep Quebec in Canada.

I myself am a francophone with Quebec and Acadian roots who was born in Saint-Boniface, in Manitoba. I lived in Ottawa for many years. I also lived in Montreal and Calgary. I became a city councillor in Victoria, British Columbia, where I now live. I know what a beautiful and diverse country Canada is. That diversity is an integral part of our identity as Canadians.

I believe strongly in the Canadian federation. I am a federalist through and through. I entered politics partly so that the federal government would hear and consider my community's priorities and voices and partly so that the federal government would not be a centralizing force, but a unifying force, protecting the social, cultural and environmental rights of all Canadians.

When I entered politics, it was also because I believe in the importance of a strong presence of both cultures in a united country. I greatly appreciate the contribution of the Quebec people to the social fabric of our country, both in the past and to date. I appreciate the Quebec culture and language, its sense of humour, music, literature and politics. These are part and parcel of what it means to be Canadian.

However, I cannot speak for Quebecers. I believe that the Quebec nation will define itself as it wishes. The Quebec National Assembly unanimously proclaimed, as was stated this morning, that

Quebeckers form a nation. That is why I wholeheartedly support the NDP acknowledgement that Quebec is a nation. I believe that we must recognize a simple fact, an obvious fact. My conversations with Quebec members of our party and my Quebec friends have convinced me that a good number of Quebecers firmly believe that the Quebec nation can realize its tremendous potential, and its destiny, in a united Canada.

They believe that Quebecers can be masters of their own destiny while being part of the Quebec nation. They do not approve of the Bloc Québécois option of a separate Quebec.

• (1135)

[English]

Similarly, I believe that the vast majority of Canadians outside Quebec want to see Quebec culture and language to be protected and thrive. We are not the same country without them. One need only think of how oversubscribed for example immersion schools are on the west coast in Vancouver and Victoria where parents have to camp outside in the fall at the time of registration to ensure that their kids can learn French. They even take part in lotteries, again to ensure that their children have the opportunity to become bilingual.

The cultural context of British Columbia is favourable to French to the extent that I was able to teach my own children to speak French and now I see my grandchildren learning French. There are many francophone associations. French music and shows are appreciated and that is also part of the contribution of Quebec to the rest of Canada.

The reaction of Canadians from coast to coast to coast in October 1995 was an extraordinary display of kinship. It reflected the overwhelming sentiment among Canadians that to lose Quebec would be to lose a part of ourselves, for Canada with Quebec is how we define Canada. I believe we are allowed, as federalists, to define our country as we see.

The evening of that famous referendum I was deeply saddened and I thought how rudderless I would feel without Quebec. Nor did I think that as a francophone my viable option was to leave western Canada to live in Quebec because I need both parts of Canada to feel truly Canadian. How can we be Canada without its intrinsic parts, without Quebec? Such a reality could not exist.

• (1140)

[Translation]

I am delighted that the Prime Minister has finally recognized Quebec as a nation. In the last election, he was urged again and again to recognize this fact. He had difficulty saying the words. It was only political gain and opportunism that led him to do so yesterday. But I congratulate him nevertheless. As is their custom, the Liberals also decided to jump on the bandwagon.

*Business of Supply*

In this debate I believe it is important to denounce the lack of vision of the Liberal Party that led us straight to the sponsorship scandal. Just like the referendum, programs steeped in corruption placed our country at risk. They damaged federalism in Quebec.

However, other current trends are worrisome for the future of our country. As Roy Romanow aptly stated in an article published in *The Walrus*:

[English]

The Canadian Council of Chief Executives, an influential lobby group that represents Canada's largest corporations, recently advanced the idea that Ottawa should grant more taxing powers to the provinces and cease making transfer payments historically used to ensure that national standards for social and economic programs are applied throughout the country. Apart from narrowly defined roles primarily in defence and foreign affairs, what is left for the federal government to do under such a scheme?

It is obvious to me there are many ways of destroying a country, whether it be by corruption but also policies and neo-conservative policies. I oppose the watering down of our Canadian social fabric by a government that substitutes tax cuts for social policy, downloads responsibilities to provinces, and sees the federal government as a mere skeleton dealing with military and foreign affairs.

[Translation]

We have to be very careful, as we make allowances for our differences, not to compromise what makes our country unique in the world. The NDP recognizes the importance of building the country, investing in what makes us unique, investing in post-secondary education, in certain social programs and in our public institutions. The NDP has long recognized Quebec's specificity, its national character and we even reiterated that during our convention, in the Sherbrooke Declaration:

The national character of Québec is based primarily, but not exclusively, on:

1. a primarily Francophone society in which French is recognized as the language of work and the common public language;
2. a specific culture, unique in America, that is expressed by a sense of identity with and belonging to Quebec;
3. a specific history;
4. a specific legal system;
5. its own economic, cultural and social institutions.

We have long proposed a vision that allows Quebec to stay proudly in Canada. What we foresee is a Canada that respects Quebec. We are proposing solutions and a vision that will make Quebeckers want to stay and build a progressive country with its allies in English Canada.

It is because we believe, first and foremost, that an egalitarian and cooperative society must accommodate and celebrate differences, and not level them, that we are supporting the concept of Quebec as a nation within Canada. Unity does not necessarily mean uniformity.

It follows that the federal Canadian state and Canadians outside Quebec recognize that Quebec has to have specific powers, some leeway in order to develop to the fullest its culture and language that are so fundamental not only to Quebec's identity, but also to Canada's identity. The NDP recognizes the historical fact that Quebeckers are a nation, a nation—and let me be clear—within Canada.

• (1145)

[English]

We are simply acknowledging a fact that is unchanged regardless of who proposes it. We know that the Bloc is playing games around this idea, but we are not. We will not play those games.

[Translation]

The people of Quebec know well, at least I hope they do, that this debate is about much more than just a word. It is about recognizing the Quebec people, with its unique culture and history and its institutions, as a truly unique society not only in Canada but worldwide, a society which is actually the envy of the world.

[English]

The NDP recognizes that Quebec forms a nation, but when it comes to the separation of Quebec from Canada, the NDP chooses Canada. It has always chosen Canada and so have Quebeckers. We are a proud federalist party. We are proud that our federation includes Quebec.

[Translation]

The Bloc's objective in Parliament is clear: it wants to see Quebec leave the great Canadian family fold. We oppose their blueprint.

[English]

In a world rife with sectarianism we must build bridges not rip them out.

[Translation]

We in the NDP believe that ordinary Quebeckers will be better served by remaining within Canada. This is why we think that, despite our differences as federalists, we must work together to really, actively create the winning conditions for Canada in Quebec. We are actively proposing a vision of cooperation, recognition, equality, respect, flexibility, transparency and honesty. We are asking the people of Quebec to join us.

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the hon. member for Victoria, for her eloquent presentation in support of one of the fundamental features of the Canadian identity, namely the recognition of Quebec's specificity. She spoke not only with words but also from the heart, and her speech was very touching.

How, in her opinion, will the recognition of Quebec's specificity and vitality help francophone communities across the country continue to develop?

How does she see the interdependence between Quebec and the francophone minorities in other regions of the country?

• (1150)

**Ms. Denise Savoie:** I thank the hon. member for his question. I sense that it is a real question. Quebec is an inspiration to Canadians and French Canadians outside that province.

*Business of Supply*

Many of my francophone friends spend summers and study in Quebec. This relation is very important to us, and we benefit a lot from it. As I said, some Canadians and francophone Canadians of French origin have chosen to settle in the west, or outside Quebec, for all sorts of reasons. This does not prevent them from appreciating Quebec and the fact that Quebec has fought over the years. I agree that it was not always easy. We have a lot of respect for these efforts, because they enabled all of us to thrive and to be who we are. Personally, it has enabled me to keep my language and to be the person that I am.

**Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord.

I did not expect to rise and speak to the House of Commons when I decided last week to come here today to renew my experience of this House where I have already spent a great deal of time and where I am still proud of representing the citizens of La Pointe-de-l'Île. I am here today and this debate concerns me deeply. I will try to speak of that in the short time I have, and I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to tell me when I have one minute remaining.

I want to remind members that Quebecers have formed a nation for a very long time and that, unfortunately, Canada as a whole has never agreed to recognize that fact. Today, I am astounded to hear certain arguments from members, whom I otherwise very much respect, speaking of this trap that the Bloc Québécois is setting for Parliament by tabling this motion today.

First of all, Quebecers have formed a nation for a very long time. My first field of study was history. At that time, people spoke of the history of Quebec and of Canada. We can believe—and there are quotations to that effect — that from the time of the French regime, before the British conquest, the Canadiens—because Quebecers of that period called themselves Canadiens to distinguish themselves from the French—already formed a nation. The Americans had given themselves a country, they had claimed their independence, but even if they had not declared their independence they would have been different from the British. They were Americans. They made up the American nation. In the same way, the Canadiens of that period, in the Canada that was a French colony, made that distinction and there was already that difference. There was this nation that was there.

Needless to say that in the British conquest—the fact that the very great majority of colonists were settled, according to the wishes of British governors, on the Ontario side for one part, and in the Eastern Townships for the other part—the high birth rate of those Canadiens, who later became French-Canadians, emphasized even more this feeling of difference. I could speak about that at length.

I want to remind members that when Lord Durham—of unhappy memory in Quebec—came after the 1837-1838 insurrections, he said, in speaking of Quebec, referring to what was then Lower Canada following the insurrection—and I learned it from my history professor during a session on Lord Durham: “*I found two nations warring in the bosom of a single state*”.

Lord Durham, after his report, concluded that the most urgent requirement was to turn those Canadiens into a minority. Once that was done, they could be given responsible government later. From

that flowed the forced union of what is today Ontario and Quebec which later became Canada. But before giving self government to the colony, which was the seed of independence, Lord Durham said: “These Canadiens must be put into a minority”.

● (1155)

This Quebec nation, recognition of which is said today to be a trap, simply expresses itself and grows differently. It is. It is, not because Canada is united. It just is.

I travel a lot and there are multinational countries, countries that have more than one nation within them—Belgium recognizes that it is one. A nation like the Quebec nation, whether it forms a country or not, is a nation. So saying that it is a trap to recognize it is extremely surprising, to say the least.

It is also surprising that for all this time, from the British conquest to today, with all of the progress by Canada and the self-satisfied image that Canadians often project, they have never wanted to recognize the Quebec nation as a nation, as a group of people united by history, by language, by culture and by a body of laws. This is as true in English as it is in French. Certainly, it is not a country. That is why Quebec cannot join the United Nations.

Why, for all this time, has Canada had such difficulty recognizing it? We need only think of the epic tale that some of us, and I myself, lived through, the tale of recognition of the distinct society and the provisions of the Charlottetown accord. Why find it so difficult to recognize the characteristics of this nation, no matter where its future lies? Once again, I am astonished to hear it said that this is a trap, or a trick. To my mind, the words I have read are much more of a trick. I read those words because I was not here yesterday, for reasons I can explain outside this chamber. And so I read what the Prime Minister said:

The real question is simple: do the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada? The answer is yes. Do the Québécois form a nation independent of Canada? The answer is no, and it will always be no.

If there is a trick anywhere, it is in what “united Canada” is intended to mean. That is why the leader of the Bloc Québécois rose just now to say that he would agree with an amendment that said “currently within a united Canada”. We want to say how things are. Quebecers are what they are in Canada today, that is true, and our motion says that.

That is why we could not understand—at least, I could not understand, myself—why this Parliament as a whole does not agree with our motion, as amended, because what we have done is precisely to make the effort to get an admission of the recognition of the Quebec nation for what it is today. We cannot accept, however, that at the same time we would be told:

Do the Québécois form a nation independent of Canada? The answer is no, and it will always be no.

In our motion, we do not want to assume what the future holds.

Why does the Prime Minister's motion, which everyone has praised, have to assume what the future holds?

● (1200)

We agree to recognize the Quebec nation, because we are sure of what the future holds.

*Business of Supply*

No. We say that we have to recognize today—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** The hon. member for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord.

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on the motion introduced by the leader of the Bloc Québécois, a motion that, as you know, is of great importance.

Given that the debate hinges on the concept of the Quebec nation, I think it makes sense to define what we mean by “nation”. The term “nation” can apply to two different things. When it applies to a state or a territory, it is synonymous with “country”. That is what we mean when we talk about the United Nations, an organization that Quebec can unfortunately not be a member of because it is not sovereign.

Therefore, if the motion as written says that Quebec is a nation, some might claim that means Quebec is a country. But that is not what the motion says. The motion is asking this House to recognize that Quebecers currently form a nation within Canada, according to the latest amendment introduced by my colleague from Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean. However, when it applies to people, the term “nation” is not synonymous with the word “country”. Dictionaries offer a wealth of information on this subject. I feel that we do not refer to them often enough.

According to the *Petit Larousse*, the term “nation” means “Large community of people, typically living within the same territory and having, to a certain extent, a shared history, language, culture and economy”.

What about the *Petit Robert*? It defines the term “nation” as a “Group of people, generally large, characterized by awareness of its unity and a desire to live together”.

That is exactly the meaning of the motion before us today.

Hon. members may have noticed that neither of these definitions refers to origins. They refer to “desire to live together” and shared culture and territory.

For those who claim that the term “nation” does not mean the same thing in French as it does in English, we checked with the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which says:

[*English*]

a large body of people united by common descent, culture, or language, inhabiting a particular state or territory.

Fin de la citation.

● (1205)

[*Translation*]

The definition is exactly the same in French. However you put it, it is clear that Quebecers form a nation.

Is Canada prepared, and that is the gist of the motion, to unconditionally recognize this obvious fact, contrary to the motion put forward by the Prime Minister? Because that is precisely what the word “united” in the Prime Minister's motion is: a condition set by the federal government.

There is a broad consensus in Quebec that Quebecers form a nation, and there has been for years. I will remind members that, as

my leader indicated, on October 30, 2003, Quebec's National Assembly unanimously passed the following motion:

That the National Assembly reaffirm that the people of Quebec form a nation.

What does unanimously mean? On October 30, 2003, at the National Assembly, it was the very same Parliament as the one sitting today. We have a majority Liberal Party government in Quebec, with the Parti Québécois as the official opposition, and a third party, the Action démocratique, which has not been recognized as a registered party because it did not get enough candidates elected, but which did vote in favour of that motion. All three parties represented at the National Assembly, regardless of federalist or separatist allegiance, unanimously voted in favour of the motion.

The motion does not state that Quebecers form a nation provided that Canada remains unchanged, or that Quebec will be a nation if it achieves sovereignty. I defy the Chair or any member of this House to find any such conditions set out anywhere in the motion before us. This motion states that Quebecers form a nation, period. There was a reason for the National Assembly to specifically state the existence of the Quebec nation. Members will understand that, when I talked about the National Assembly reaffirming that the people of Quebec form a nation, I was referring to the motion it unanimously passed on October 30, 2003.

Let us now see what Maurice Duplessis said in April of 1946:

The Canadian confederation is a treaty of union between two nations.

Jean Lesage said in November 1963:

Quebec did not defend provincial autonomy simply for the principle of it, but because, for Quebec, autonomy was the specific condition not for its survival, which is assured, but for its affirmation as a people and a nation.

I am running out of time, but I also have quotes from Daniel Johnson Sr. in 1968, René Lévesque in June 1980, Jacques Parizeau in December 1994 and Lucien Bouchard in October 1999. They were all premiers who reaffirmed throughout the years that Quebecers, the people of Quebec, are a nation.

● (1210)

The Prime Minister would like Quebecers to form a nation only within a united Canada. This is a bit ridiculous, and my colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île went over this a little. It just so happens that Quebec was a nation long before Canada existed. I am going to run out of time since I was given only 10 minutes. Nonetheless, hon. members could refer to what Talon said in 1667, what the French sailor, Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, said in 1756 or even what Lord Durham said about the revolt of the Patriots in 1838. It is worth mentioning what Lord Durham said, “I expected to find a conflict between a government and a people, but instead found two nations at war within the same state”.

I want to close by referring firmly to what the Leader of the Bloc Québécois said yesterday:

I would never insist that Quebecers form a nation only on the condition that they have a country, nor would I ever accept that we could be recognized as a nation only on the condition that we stay in Canada.

We are a nation, because we are what we are, regardless of what the future might bring.

It is important to re-read the wording of the motion before us today.



*Business of Supply*

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank my colleague for his eloquence in explaining the Prime Minister's intention respecting the motion he put forward yesterday.

For us and for many observers, this is an empty shell, a meaningless thing. As my colleague and the member for La Pointe-de-l'Île said, they will recognize our nation as long as we remain within a united Canada. This is an aberration, and I have proof demonstrating the absurdity of being recognized as long as we remain within Canada. It will be up to Quebeckers to decide this in a referendum, and it is not something to be imposed on us.

What we see is the Conservative government's wish to accept the Quebec nation, but within an empty shell or framework. I can prove this: at the environment conference in Nairobi, what space was made for a nation that is supposed to be recognized? And what happens in appearances on the international scene?

I would like my colleague to explain the context of this conference and the place made for Quebec—as long we are on our knees.

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** Indeed, as my colleague from Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher mentioned to me, this is a very relevant question. Quebec asked to make its voice heard, to say that it was not in agreement with the Conservatives' opinion regarding the Kyoto protocol. Quebec asked for a chance to express itself, to explain to the world that there was a difference.

But the Minister of the Environment, with the support of the Prime Minister, said that Canada would speak with one voice. So there was no opportunity for expressing any dissidence. It is ironic: the Quebec Minister of Environment, as a fallback, requested 45 seconds to express his position, but his request was rejected.

The Minister of the Environment said that she will use the courts and the corridors to promote her vision. But this is not what Quebec is asking for. Quebec is asking to be recognized as such. That is the meaning of the motion before us.

I will answer my colleague from Québec that it is almost as if someone made the following statement: men and women are equal as long as they remain a united couple. Does that mean that, if a couple is no longer united, the man and the woman are no longer equal? That is what the Conservatives' proposal means.

• (1215)

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what is ironic today is that a member from Quebec talks about the environment—which is a fundamental issue—but refuses to support the clean air bill that will, at last, allow us to curb climate change. What is also ironic is that today, a parliamentarian who was democratically elected by Quebeckers, refuses to support a motion that enjoys unanimous support in this House, a motion recognizing that Quebeckers form a nation. Even more ironic is the fact he is opposed to this motion and refuses to acknowledge the reality, namely that Quebec is a province within Canada. I would like the hon. member to answer yes or no to my question. Is Quebec part of Canada? If so, why does he oppose the motion?

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** Mr. Speaker, we are simply asking that this House recognize that Quebeckers currently form a nation within Canada.

[*English*]

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I begin today with a reminder from the Confederation debates of 1864, quoting a father of Confederation:

Then let us be firm and united—  
One country, one flag for us all:  
United, our strength will be freedom—  
Divided, we each of us fall.

Yesterday the Prime Minister of Canada put forward the following motion:

[*Translation*]

That this House recognize that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada.

[*English*]

I speak in this House as a western Canadian who is passionate about the history of our country and the future that we share together.

I have been privileged in my time in public service to travel the length and breadth of this remarkable country and to experience every region. As the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, I have explored the most distant reaches of this remarkable and compelling land, travelling in the company of extraordinary Canadians who comprise our first nations.

[*Translation*]

I am also rising in this House today as a francophile, as a Canadian who recognizes, who respects and who embraces Quebeckers' language, culture and history. I am addressing this motion today as a Canadian who is proud of his whole country and of the diversity that prevails within its borders.

[*English*]

The debate that concerns the House is properly before us. The Prime Minister of this country has shown decisiveness and courage in putting forward a motion which effectively responds to the mischief put forward by the Bloc Québécois. In a constructive way, the motion addresses the desire of Canadians to stand as a united country, while also recognizing the foundational role of les Québécois as one of the nations of people who comprise Canada.

The leader of the Bloc and his separatist colleagues do not seek a definition of les Québécois within the context of a united Canada. That is what distinguishes we who are the federalists in this House of Commons, separating us from those who would divide, separate and diminish us. They are not concerned with defining les Québécois, nor are they concerned with the advancement of the very special language, culture, traditions and history of les Québécois within the context of this, the most remarkable nation on the face of the earth. Instead, they would unleash a divisive debate that pits Canadians one against the other and les Québécois against themselves. This is a road that this government will not travel.

*Business of Supply*

•(1220)

[*Translation*]

The Bloc Québécois continues to want to raise the issue of sympathy. It wants to break Canada. The Bloc Québécois' mission is to defend and promote its own interests, not those of Quebecers. We disagree with that. Quebecers, and other Canadians, are all builders of our country. This government and this Prime Minister will protect the unity of our country, which we have all helped build.

[*English*]

This Prime Minister and this new government prefer to travel on the road of nation building, on the same journey as other great prime ministers and great parties. This was the chosen path of Sir John A. Macdonald on a route that he travelled with George-Étienne Cartier. It was also the path of Laurier, Trudeau and Mulroney.

As Conservatives, we affirm and recognize that les Québécois form a nation within a United Canada.

[*Translation*]

We, the Conservatives, prefer to build a stronger Quebec within a better Canada. Quebecers want tangible, concrete results, which the Bloc will never be able to deliver.

[*English*]

This is an immense country, remarkable in its diversity and in the strands of the ethnological, the linguistic and the cultural riches that define the tapestry that is Canada. As a western Canadian, I cherish this vibrant and colourful mosaic.

It is important to recognize that the creation of this country began with several founding nations, but that Canada has since benefited from the influx of new Canadians from every single corner of the globe. I have often been struck by the fact that, as one reads the speeches surrounding Confederation, this immigration and this peopling of the west was indeed the very plan of the Fathers of Confederation.

I would observe as well, parenthetically, that the first nations of Canada, the aboriginal peoples, including the Inuit and the Métis, have from the outset contributed to the Canada that we know today.

We have done all of this in a manner that has become a beacon to the world. We have succeeded in building a country that is the envy of all people by reason of the prosperity we have, the freedoms we enjoy, and the respect, the tolerance and the civility with which we treat one another as fellow citizens.

The Bloc seeks to end all of this. The Bloc seeks to drive wedges between us. The Bloc seeks to separate us. We must always remember that this is their *raison d'être*. It is the reason they exist and it is their fervent ambition.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister said yesterday, the true intention of the Bloc leader and the sovereigntist camp is perfectly clear. They hope to separate, divide and break Canada apart. But we must uphold Canadian unity. We must defend national unity. Our Prime Minister and this government defend Canada, which, for us,

includes a Quebec that is strong, confident and proud, a Quebec that is stronger within a better Canada.

Indeed, we are all proud to live in this country called Canada.

•(1225)

[*English*]

Indeed, we can all be proud to call Canada our home.

I have often marvelled at the construct of Canada. Why have we succeeded in the creation of such a great country?

To attempt to answer this question personally, I have often turned to the Confederation debates and the words of our Fathers of Confederation at the time they created this wonderful country. The Fathers of Confederation chose a form of government uniquely suited to expressing and accommodating regional, linguistic and religious diversity. The most important example of this diversity was undoubtedly the existence of the two major language groups.

[*Translation*]

With our linguistic diversity, we are the envy of many countries that are still unable to resolve their cultural differences.

[*English*]

One of the major factors in the creation of Canada as a federation was the presence of Quebec. The founders of our country wanted to build a nation which embraced our diversity.

There can be no doubt that in the heart of this country and all that we have achieved lies the compact that was defined by the Fathers of Confederation. This compact was based upon the recognition of the nationhood of les Québécois, the uniqueness of their language, their culture, their tradition and their history.

None of this was in dispute at the time of Confederation, as the British American provinces united freely, voluntarily and with the fullest intent to protect and advance those very characteristics. The concept of Confederation has always been that les Québécois and other Canadians would be stronger in unity than we would in division.

This was the concept of Canada. It is that very respect, tolerance and acceptance which not only lies at the heart of this country but which has in every way permeated the character and the philosophy of what we have created.

I quote for illustrative purposes H.L. Langevin, after whom the edifice across the street is named, who said:

We are told: "You wish to form a new nationality". Let us come to an understanding on this word...What we desire and wish is to defend the general interests of a great country and of a powerful nation, by means of a central power. On the other hand, we do not wish to do away with our different customs, manner, and laws; on the contrary those are precisely what we are desirous of protecting in the most complete manner by means of Confederation.

Central to the Confederation debates was George-Étienne Cartier. He was described at that time as the finest statesman in North America. His oratory carried the day in the conferences leading up to Confederation. In 1864, he asked this question:

Was it surprising that some should try to find difficulties in the way of the formation of a Union because there happened to be different races and religions? I have already spoken about the elements which are necessary to constitute a nation.

*Business of Supply*

As Cartier said of Confederation in 1867:

We sealed our pact without bloodshed and without exploitation of the weak by the strong. All it took was fairness, justice and some compromises on both sides.

The words spoken at the commencement of this country ring true today also. My friend Jean Charest, the current premier of Quebec, has said:

Recognizing Quebec as being different, recognizing our history, recognizing our identity, has never meant a weakening of Quebec and has never been a threat to national unity.

[*Translation*]

That is the nature of the country we have built. Canada is strengthened by its new immigrants as well as by its first nations, creating one of the most beautiful, diverse countries in the world, a country where great opportunities abound for everyone.

[*English*]

A nation drawn together as an act of will in 1867 by les Québécois and their fellow citizens of the English speaking provinces, and so yes, les Québécois do form a nation within a united Canada.

The Bloc, on the other hand, posits that Quebec itself is a nation and that it is a nation extraneous to Canada. The political entity of Quebec is not an independent nation, and if Cartier, Langevin and their descendants are to have their way, and if we as Canadians govern ourselves with goodwill and with a large and generous spirit, the answer will always be no.

Because of all of the attributes in Canada, that which is most central, that which is most important to who we are, is the respect with which we treat one another. We are unaffected by divisions, by distinctions of race, religion, gender or creed, and the humanity and the compassion that inspire us will always prevail.

The motion put forward by the Prime Minister does not recognize the province of Quebec as a nation. Rather, it recognizes les Québécois, the people of Quebec, as a nation within a united Canada. The difference is crucial.

• (1230)

[*Translation*]

The Bloc Québécois is seeking to tear this country apart. We, on the other hand, defend national unity. We defend Canada. We defend a strong Canada. Together, we have become what we are.

[*English*]

We are, as the Prime Minister has said, a shining example of the humanity that can be achieved through respect and forbearance, by way of our willingness to respect the language, the culture and the history of one another, the recognition of the history, the language and the culture of les Québécois.

Today, Canada is a prosperous and politically stable country because we have made diversity an asset rather than a problem. Canadians are able, as a result, to make democratic choices based on a respect of human rights, and today, more than ever, we understand that accommodating pluralism is not merely a political necessity but a source of pride and enrichment that reflects Canadians values.

Our capacity to adapt as a society and to build institutions that respond to the demands of our citizens has served us very well.

Federalism is the natural response to governing a large, demographically and regionally diverse country. With 10 provinces, 3 territories, 6 time zones and bordering on 3 oceans, Canada's regional diversity is obvious.

Our diversity is also reflected in the two official languages. Almost all Canadians speak English or French, and one in five also speaks a non-official tongue. In Newfoundland and Labrador, 98% of the people have English as a mother tongue, while in Quebec, 81% have French as a mother tongue. In Nunavut, 79% speak Inuktitut, a language spoken by less than 1 in a 1,000 Canadians.

Canada's first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, stated emphatically:

I have no accord with the desire expressed in some quarters that by any mode whatever there should be an attempt made to oppress the one language or render it inferior to the other: I believe that would be impossible if it were tried, and it would be foolish and wicked if it were possible.

And so it is not in this Canada.

We are a pluralistic society, not just because of the diversity in the makeup of the population, whether linguistic, cultural or regional, but, more important, because we have come to understand that these differences contribute to our national community and our identity. In that sense, Canadians are a symbol of hope to a very dangerous and divided world.

The Bloc wants to separate Canada. That is something that our party and our government will never accept. That is something that this Prime Minister will always stand against immediately, unequivocally and decisively.

There are those who question whether this debate is properly before the federal House of Commons. I say that the Bloc has brought this question before the House. While its original intent may have been mischief, this new government and this new Prime Minister shall decisively resolve the matter in favour of les Québécois and in favour of a united Canada.

I am heartened by the integrity of other federalist parties in this House of Commons. I am moved by their willingness to set aside partisanship and to follow this Prime Minister on the road of statesmanship. Again, the wisdom of this path finds its antecedence in the debates of the founding fathers who similarly and wisely set aside their differences.

In closing, I echo the words of the great Sir John A. Macdonald on September 1, 1864, at the Charlottetown conference. When commenting upon les Québécois and the other founding partners of Confederation, he observed, "Our hearts are one. It was so then. It is today even more so the case".

We shall press on as the federalists in this House of Commons, protective of one another and protective of the peoples and the nations which constitute Canada. May we, however, be ever wary of those who would separate us, those who would divide us and those who would seek to destroy what the unity of our peoples has created.

I close, as an Albertan, with the words of another Albertan, Ian Tyson, who, together with Peter Gzowski, wrote a song entitled, *Song For Canada*, reminding us that we are one nation. It went as follows:

*Business of Supply*

Just one great river, always rolling to the sea  
 One single river rolling in eternity  
 Two nations in this land, that lie along its shore  
 But just one river rolling free

● (1235)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have listened from the beginning to the minister's lovely quotes. It is great to see that he has been reading. The problem is he may not have read the Bloc Québécois motion. Is he blinded by his partisanship? I will reread the motion to him:

That this House recognize that Quebecers form a nation currently within Canada.

It does not say that Quebec is a nation. I agree with him, that would mean a sovereign state. We have said that Quebecers form a nation, so that the Quebec people may be recognized as a nation. I would like him to read the Bloc Québécois motion as tabled with a very open mind.

The Bloc Québécois members are the most adept at defending the concept of the Quebec nation here in this House. We have seen this in the past. This is not the first time that we have tabled a motion.

The minister now realizes that it does not state that Quebec is a nation, but rather:

—Quebeckers form a nation currently within Canada.

I would like to know whether or not the minister will vote in favour of this motion, as the Bloc Québécois will do.

**Hon. Jim Prentice:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this question. However, the Bloc Québécois wants to divide Canada and destroy Canadian unity. We disagree with that. The Conservative Party and the Prime Minister wish to protect the interests of Canada.

That this House recognize that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada.

[*English*]

This is the motion that is before the House that the Prime Minister introduced yesterday.

The Bloc motion is one that seeks to tear apart this country by separatist mischief. Our destiny as a country will not be shaped nor will it be struck by these kinds of motions that seek to tear apart the fabric that has shaped our country. Our destiny is one as a united front.

My friend accepts many of the quotes that I have put forward. We must be true and courageous in sticking to the words of our founding fathers of one country in which uniqueness is accepted, respected, tolerated and encouraged. In the end, this will make for a stronger Canada and a united Canada. What this Prime Minister and this government stand for is a united and strong country, a country that is united for all Canadians.

**Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in his capacity as Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, he, of all people in this House, understands the importance of nations within a nation.

I will say upfront that we do develop friendships with our colleagues from the Bloc but we absolutely disagree with its whole purpose for being as a party, which is to destroy this country.

Yesterday, in response to a threat to this country by a motion that was presented by the Bloc, we saw the rest of the parties, the rest of the representatives from across the country and even some from Quebec, stand together against that threat. I think the Prime Minister, in his motion, has made a great move to maybe open up the debate but also to make Canadians feel that we are one and we will always remain one.

As an Albertan and a fellow westerner, I would like to ask my colleague to maybe delve a bit further into the issue of recognizing the Quebec people, Quebecers, as a nation in relationship to recognizing Quebec as a nation. The motion put forward by the Prime Minister recognizes Quebecers.

● (1240)

**Hon. Jim Prentice:** Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that this country has no more loyal servant than that hon. member. He has served this country faithfully and to the best of his ability for his entire career here in the House of Commons. I am privileged to serve with him.

The motion put forward by the Prime Minister recognizes les Québécois, the people of Quebec, as a nation within the context of a united Canada. The motion put forward does not recognize the legal entity of Quebec, the province of Quebec as a nation. That is an entirely different matter. The province of Quebec is a constituent element of Canada. I have referred to the founding fathers in the debate, which takes us back many years in history to how and when that came to be.

Fundamental to Confederation is the concept that we would respect one another. The motion put forward by the Prime Minister in the House recognizes les Québécois, the people of Quebec, the people who live in Quebec, the people who have been there for hundreds of years through their antecedents, the people who have a unique history, an identity in this country, a language and a culture that has firm roots going back 400 years along the St. Lawrence valley and the rock of the Canadian Shield.

For us to recognize les Québécois as a nation within the context of Canada speaks to the respect and the maturity of this country.

My friend also commented upon my capacity as the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. It is not a difficult step for me as the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development because I deal on a daily basis with 630 first nations from across Canada, people who are working together with les Québécois and other Canadians to build this remarkable country. There is nothing in their distinctiveness, their culture or in their pride of this country that makes Canada weaker. It makes it stronger. And so it is with les Québécois and the language, culture, history and tradition of our wonderful brothers from Quebec that make Canada a stronger country.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel.

*Business of Supply*

I am extremely proud to rise and speak to the motion introduced by the Bloc Québécois that reads as follows:

That this House recognize that Quebecers form a nation currently within Canada.

This is a fact that has long been recognized by Quebecers themselves. It is also a fact that has often been reaffirmed by all the parties in the Quebec National Assembly, whether federalist or sovereignist. The Bloc's intent, in tabling this motion, was to give the House an opportunity to recognize a reality that Canada has always refused to recognize. We introduced a motion, therefore, that was as neutral and objective as possible and simply recognizes that Quebecers form a nation.

Unfortunately, the Prime Minister wanted to play with words and tabled his own motion yesterday afternoon. He subverted the debate and deflected it from its true intent in order to introduce another idea—which was not at all what the Bloc wanted—about the constitutional future, the future that Quebecers will have as a nation.

I really think that this manoeuvre was downright dishonest. He diverted the real debate. This was obvious in what the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development had to say. This is not a debate about whether we want to have sovereignty or keep the Quebec nation part of the Canadian political federation. It is simply about whether Canada is capable, once and for all, of recognizing that Quebecers form a nation. This is obviously no longer possible because the debate has been subverted. They are incapable of telling us what this concept of nationhood, as recognized by the House of Commons and Canada, actually means.

The Prime Minister's tactics or manoeuvres, which I would describe as dishonest, avoid once again providing real, formal, clear recognition. Everything has been all mixed together in the speeches I have heard this morning.

In a spirit of goodwill, the Bloc Québécois amended its own motion to be even more objective and neutral. That is why we said: "...Quebeckers form a nation currently within Canada". That is a reality. We are a nation and we are still within Canada. I really cannot see, therefore, why the Conservatives, Liberals and NDP would vote against a motion that simply states a fact.

On the other hand, what is false is what we find in the Prime Minister's motion when he says that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada. That is not true. Those are not the facts. That is imagination. It is perhaps what he wants or what he dreams of, but it is not true.

If we go back to the beginnings of Confederation and the beginning of the history of Canada and Quebec, Canada was never a nation, even less united. As we know, since 1982, no Quebec government, whether federalist or sovereignist, has agreed to sign the 1982 Constitution, which was unilaterally patriated by the Liberal government of the time headed by Pierre Elliott Trudeau. There is a reason why Quebecers have never elected a Liberal majority in Ottawa since that time. For a few mandates, they elected Conservatives under the leadership of Brian Mulroney. Since the departure of Mr. Mulroney and after the failure of the Meech Lake Accord, Quebecers have decided to elect the Bloc Québécois.

The fact that the Prime Minister included "a united Canada" in his statement is not only contrary to reality, it is in fact disdainful of the positions adopted by the National Assembly and the various Quebec governments since 1982. By manoeuvring in this fashion, by including in his motion the word "united" before the word "Canada", supposedly to recognize the Quebec nation, he has trivialized the decisions taken by the National Assembly and the governments that have refused to sign the Constitution.

● (1245)

They are closing their eyes to the reality of Canada, whose political system is currently in crisis, as is clearly reflected in this House. There is a reason why we have had a minority government for the last two mandates. It is because Canada is in crisis. The fact that Canadian federalists, particularly those outside Quebec, are refusing to recognize that reality does not change anything: far from it.

The Bloc Québécois has tabled a motion that is intended to be objective and neutral, so as to permit the House of Commons to recognize the reality once and for all, that reality being the existence of a Quebec nation within the Canadian political arena. Unfortunately, they have fallen into petty manoeuvring, and unfortunately, we will probably be unable to close this discussion, unless this House adopts the motion tabled by the Bloc, a motion which does nothing more than reflect reality.

I would point out once again that, by adopting the Bloc's motion, we will not be deciding on the future of the Quebec nation, but simply leaving the doors completely open. I and my colleagues in the Bloc, like a good many Quebecers, have already drawn our conclusions about what that future should be, but the debate is not over. That has nothing to do with the debate that is going on here, because it will in any case be Quebecers—the Quebec nation—who will alone decide on their future, in accordance with the rules democratically established in the National Assembly.

All that we can do here, in this place, is to recognize the Quebec nation and the particular role of the Quebec state. Of course, this House and the governments sitting here in Ottawa can also provide this Quebec nation with tools to help it develop, particularly with respect to its most profound identity. Obviously this is not the direction we are taking with the Prime Minister's motion. If the motion of the Bloc Québécois were adopted, however, that would create an opening.

I would point out that in political spaces that are states and countries, more than one nation can coexist. Canada is an example of this. There are others in the world. Russia, Spain and Great Britain are examples. But in order for such countries to develop harmoniously, there has to be mutual, respectful recognition. The minister said so, but it is not how things really are. There is no respect for the Quebec nation. The motion introduced by the Prime Minister is yet another example of this.

*Business of Supply*

The fact of recognizing the Quebec nation is not what causes problems. The fact of not respecting it does that. I would have hoped, and I imagine that my ancestors would also have hoped, that within this political space, Canada, which in fact combines the former colonies of British North America, recognition of the Quebec nation would come much sooner. I would also have hoped that we would agree to recognize that there is a Canadian nation, an Acadian nation and the first nations, and above all to recognize that those nations must have governments, authorities or administrative bodies that provide them with their own instruments for advancing their interests. That has always been denied. Today, still, the government is unfortunately denying it.

It is not what I hope for, but it seems to me that this House is once again moving toward disrespect for the reality of Quebec.

Within a country, it could very easily have been imagined—in my opinion it is too late, but perhaps not for everyone in Quebec—that through that mutual respect, a spirit of solidarity could be developed and Canada could exist in a real sense. That is not the case. Unfortunately, history shows us that it is not possible. At least, that is the conclusion we have reached. That is why, in all friendship, we want to make Quebec sovereign and have the most harmonious possible relations with our neighbours in Canada.

In conclusion, that is not the purpose of the debate today. We are asking that this House recognize the existence of the Quebec nation, a civic nation to which the anglophone minority and all the waves of immigrants that have happily washed over Quebec belong; to recognize that this nation has a common language—which does not prevent people from speaking the language of their choice at home, or the anglo-Quebec minority from having its own institutions, but the common language, in the political space, within the Quebec nation, is French; to recognize that we have a common history that is distinct, although it is connected to the history of Canada; to recognize that we have a unique culture, one that is a crossroads and that is our own vision of something that is emerging in many places in the world.

• (1250)

Quebec's culture is not a culture that is closed to what others can contribute. Obviously the French, British and aboriginal traditions, and the traditions of everyone who has come and helped to enrich this Quebec culture, are part of our unique vision of the world. That is Quebec culture. That is what we are asking this House to recognize.

If, unfortunately—and I hope not—the House rejected the Bloc's motion, we would conclude that Canada, once again, did not really want to recognize the existence of the Quebec nation.

**Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on having made a very clear and concise presentation, both on our motion and on the motion by the current government.

I would like to ask him a question. Does he believe that the motion of the present Conservative government was tabled in order to please Quebecers and to give them something specific in terms of this recognition, because based on a recent survey—done about a week ago—it seems that 83% of Canadians in the rest of Canada do not recognize the idea of a Québécois nation?

So, is it to please their electors? In other words, did the government word this motion specifically with electors in mind?

• (1255)

**Mr. Pierre Paquette:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member very much for his question because that is an aspect that I had not raised.

Not only is the motion put forward by the Prime Minister a problematic manoeuvre, not only does it fly in the face of reality but, in addition, it is clear that it is simply motivated by electoral objectives.

They are playing with words, just as they played with words last December 19 by saying that not only did they recognize the fiscal imbalance, but also that they were going to fix it.

We will be hearing the economic statement this afternoon and I am very anxious to see how the Minister of Finance intends to give some indication about the settling of that issue, which is a promise from the Prime Minister and which was another occasion for playing with words.

It is the same thing concerning our role at UNESCO. They told us that Quebec would have a voice in certain fields; that Quebec could speak for itself. What do we have the right to do at UNESCO? We have the right to speak as a member of the Canadian delegation, and if there is no agreement, it is the delegation of the central federal government that speaks on behalf of Canada, including Quebec.

We saw it in Nairobi. The Quebec Minister of the Environment wanted to speak but he was not allowed to. Not only was he not permitted to speak, but they led people to believe that everywhere in Canada, everybody agreed not to respect the Kyoto protocol.

This motion is not only election-minded, but it also plays with words and attempts to pull the wool over the eyes of Quebecers about the real intentions of this government and all the federalist members of this House.

Quebeckers will not be fooled. I tell you that not only will the Bloc Québécois candidate be elected in Repentigny next Monday but in the next election there will be even more of us in this House if the Bloc motion is not adopted as it stands.

[English]

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my friend's comments and one word jumped out at me. It was the word "neutral". He referred to the Bloc motion as being a neutral motion. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, my experience in the House has been that the Bloc and its actions within the House typically have a partisan nature to them.

It has already been said many times that it was very clear from the motion that this was intended to create a mischief within the House to promote division within Canada. If in fact the member wants clarity and wants to get rid of the ambiguity, why does he not support our motion which simply clarifies that Quebecers are a nation within a united Canada?

*Business of Supply*

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paquette:** Why can we not support the Prime Minister's motion, Mr. Speaker? Had "Canada" not been qualified in the motion, we could have supported it, because it is true that Quebec, the people of Quebec, form a nation, and an inclusive one at that, within the Canadian political space. But using the word "unified" runs counter to reality, for it is not true that Canada is a unified country.

Quebec, the National Assembly and successive Quebec governments, whether federalist or sovereignist, have refused to sign the Constitution of 1982. How can Canada be united when the Constitution was not signed by a component as important as Quebec? That is contrary to reality. Personally, I am not in the habit of going counter to the facts. If the Prime Minister was sincere in making his remarks, he should amend his motion himself to have the word "united" removed. Then, I will have no problem supporting the motion. As it stands, it is not right, and that is what diverted the debate. It gives the impression that Canada is a united country, which it is not. At the same time, positions taken by the National Assembly and various governments have been trivialized by statements to the effect that Quebec not having signed the Constitution of 1982 is no big deal. They say we are united, but that is not true.

I will conclude by saying that the debate has been diverted. The Prime Minister's motion could be interpreted to mean, among other things, as the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville said, that Quebec is a nation within the Canadian nation. So—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** The hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel.

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from Joliette on his excellent speech. It gives me an opportunity to put in my two cents' worth about this motion introduced by the Bloc Québécois.

I will go back to the original motion, because we have proposed an amendment. The Conservative Party has even made it a separate motion. Everyone is ascribing all sorts of intentions to the Bloc Québécois, when it is actually being true to itself. It wants recognition that Quebecers form a nation. This is not the first time that the Bloc Québécois has introduced a motion to that effect in this House.

That surprises me and will always surprise me. I have been here since 2000, so obviously I was not around for the saga of the Clarity Act. But today I can see the federalist parties' position on Quebec, and I can imagine what things must have been like when the clarity bill was introduced. The original motion made by the Bloc Québécois was crystal clear. Excuse the redundancy, but it could not have been any clearer:

That this House recognize that Quebecers form a nation.

That was the Bloc Québécois motion. The Bloc Québécois did not sit down one morning and decide that because these were nice words, it was going to write this motion. On the contrary, every word is important. That is why we chose "that Quebecers form a nation"; we did not choose "that Quebec forms a nation". It is simple. Dictionaries define the word "nation". The word "nation" can be used in reference to a state or territory. For example, the word

"nation" in "Quebec is a nation" would be synonymous with "country".

But the Bloc Québécois did not want to trick the House of Commons. It wanted to show its openness and to avoid involving anyone in a partisan fight by asking for recognition that Quebec is a nation. Instead, it proposes to recognize that Quebecers form a nation. Simply put, according to the definition in the *Larousse* dictionary, the word "nation", when applied to people, means:

Large community of people, typically living within the same territory and having, to a certain extent, a shared history, language, culture and economy.

For the benefit of some, I can use an English dictionary, the *Oxford English Dictionary*:

A large body of people united by common descent, culture and language inhabiting a particular state or territory.

The Bloc Québécois made sure that the motion it tabled in the House was crystal clear precisely so there would be no political partisanship.

The Conservatives did not choose to table an amendment or to ask the mover of the motion for an amendment; they simply took the motion put forward by the Bloc Québécois and made it their own, adding the words "within a united Canada", which made it a partisan motion. That is what the Conservative Party chose to do.

Of course, I cannot help but smile when federalist parties that supported the clarity bill tell us today that the Bloc Québécois is not clear and reject our motion to table one that is a lot more partisan than ours. I have seen it all. Other colleagues in this House have said that they have seen it all; today, I have seen in all.

I did not take part in the debate on the clarity bill. However, I am taking part today in this debate on the motion put forward by the Bloc Québécois, a party that has never hidden the fact that it wants this House to recognize Quebecers as a nation. It is not the first but the third time that it has proposed such a motion. Whatever the circumstances, we are always consistent. We tabled a motion that was meant to be as clear as possible, but it was not clear enough for the Conservative Party that had to put a partisan slant to it.

Today we are trying to clarify our situation and to make the Conservatives, the Liberals and the New Democrats understand that we do not want to force them into an ideological or political war. We are defending a sovereignist option and, one day, Quebecers will democratically settle the issue. Two referendums have been held so far, and rest assured that there will be a third one. Quebecers will make that choice. It is not something that we wanted to impose on the Canadian Parliament.

I will reread the motion, because earlier, I heard the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development explaining that the aim was to have Quebec recognized as a nation and accordingly a country. No, I am sorry. Let us read the Bloc's motion carefully. I will reread it for my colleagues in this House, in order to demonstrate our good faith:

That this House recognize that Quebecers form a nation.

*Business of Supply*

• (1300)

In order to clarify our position, we have added “currently within Canada”. Yes, currently, Quebecers are within Canada. We say this perhaps in all honesty. You think we have some ulterior motive behind what we are after, which is recognition.

Other parties have problems in this House. Other parties have political problems. All we want is to simply have the House recognize what the National Assembly of Quebec recognized and passed on October 30, 2003, when it stated that the people of Quebec form a nation.

The members of that assembly did not use the word “Quebec”. The National Assembly used the words “people of Quebec”. We used the words “Quebeckers”. It amounts to the same thing—the people.

Let us return to the dictionary definition. I find the position of the Conservatives and the other members of this House nonsensical. The *Larousse* dictionary provides that the word “nation”, when applied to people refers to a large community of people, typically living within the same territory and having, to a certain extent, a shared history, language, culture and economy.

You cannot claim Quebecers do not form a large community of people. Seven million five hundred thousand people—a large community, in my opinion.

Although it is not the subject of the debate, I will nevertheless say that, if Quebec became a country, it would rank 95th of 230 countries in the world in terms of its population.

It cannot be said that Quebec is not a large community and that Quebecers, as a nation, do not form a large community with 7.5 million inhabitants. The definition also provides “typically living within the same territory”. Well, indeed Quebecers do live within the same territory. This is not the subject of today's debate either, and I do not wish to be partisan, but should Quebec become a country, it would be 18th among the 230 countries in the world in terms of its size.

You cannot accuse us of saying that we are not living within the same territory or that it is not a territory with a shared history. Some federalist members have even referred to the history of Quebec. Quebec has its linguistic history. I cite the definition from the *Larousse* dictionary again; it says “having a shared history, language”. You cannot deny that Quebec is French. It is the largest francophone territory in North America. Nothing more needs to be said about this linguistic fact. In terms of culture, you cannot deny Quebecers have their own cultural structure. Our artists are known throughout the world, whether we think of Cirque du Soleil, Céline Dion or others. The definition talks about having a shared economy, to a certain extent. If Quebec were to be a country, it would rank 20th in terms of gross domestic product, out of 230 countries.

The purpose and objective of the Bloc Québécois are not to engage in a partisan debate about Quebec sovereignty. The objective of the Bloc Québécois is for the House of Commons to settle the nation issue once and for all. That is why the question was so lucid and so clear. The first motion that was introduced by the Bloc, and

because of which the Conservatives introduced a motion in an attempt to have a completely new debate, was worded as follows:

That this House recognize that Quebecers form a nation.

It was that simple. We extended our hand to the federalists who found it so difficult to recognize Quebecers as a nation. I can understand them. Recognizing Quebec as a nation, according to the dictionary definitions, is like recognizing Quebec as a country. I say: the Bloc Québécois motion has been studied and analyzed. We have used the correct terms.

It is the Conservative Party that decided—once again, the ones who voted for the referendum clarity act—to take that clear motion, to eliminate it completely and to introduce its own motion. The Conservatives wanted to say: “Look, they are wrong”.

I hope they will understand that it is up to Quebec to choose a question for its referendum, it is not up to the Conservatives to decide that. Once again, in this House, they are incapable of accepting the clear position in a very clear and very lucid motion by the Bloc Québécois, a motion talking about the Quebec nation, that Quebecers form a nation.

I hope that my Conservative colleagues will make a little progress and understand that there was no malicious intent in the position taken by the Bloc Québécois, other than to get federalists in the rest of Canada to understand that Quebecers form a nation.

• (1305)

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and Minister for la Francophonie and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am first and foremost a Quebecer, and proud of it. The blood in my veins is that of a Quebecer and I have a Quebecer's roots and culture. For the first time, yesterday, we were witness here to a unique and historical gesture.

What makes me think that the Bloc's approach is partisan is that we included “united Canada” in the motion. It is true. And why? What bothers the Bloc members most? Is it that we recognized the Quebec nation or that they realized that nationalist Quebecers could be sovereignists or federalists, and that both had their place in Quebec?

• (1310)

**Mr. Mario Laframboise:** Mr. Speaker, I am having trouble following my colleague's train of thought because I have been explaining to her quite simply since a while ago that the Bloc Québécois motion says that Quebecers form a nation. If she says she is a nationalist, all she has to do is vote in favour of this motion. It is as simple as that.

It is the Conservative Party that decided to turn this into a partisan debate, by writing “within a united Canada”, meaning by that that Quebec could never determine its own future outside Canada. But as far as I know we still belong to a democracy, and Quebec will always have the right to choose its own destiny.

We did not wish to turn this into a partisan debate. This is why we did not say, “Quebec forms a nation”; we said: “Quebeckers form a nation”. And I repeat it.



*Business of Supply*

I do not have a monopoly on *Le Petit Larousse*; there are copies in all good bookstores. As I said earlier, the term “nation” is used to talk about people. We are not talking about countries.

This is the open-mindedness with which the Bloc Québécois expressed itself. The Conservatives opted to make this into a partisan debate. Quebeckers will not be taken in.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Quebec’s intentions are very clear.

[*English*]

My hon. colleague talked about a hidden agenda, that we would be suspicious that the Bloc had a hidden agenda. Who are we trying to kid here? This makes me laugh if it was not such a serious thing for Canada. We talk about partisanship. I am a partisan Canadian, pure and simple, from coast to coast to coast. I am Canadian.

I have spent a lot of time in all parts of Canada. I own a little piece of Quebec. My hon. colleague owns a little piece of Alberta. He can choose to claim that little piece of Alberta if he wishes to or not, but I choose to claim my little piece of Quebec as a Canadian. I will never give up that right.

We will talk about partisanship, but I would like to ask the member a question. How is being a partisan Canadian, if he wants to call me partisan, any different than being as partisan as he is being now as a Quebec sovereignist, a Quebec separatist?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Laframboise:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's party chose to have a partisan debate on a non-partisan motion presented by the Bloc Québécois. If the hon. member is trying to say that he would have supported that motion had it been tabled by any other party in this House, it is even worse. It is even more humiliating for federalists in the rest of Canada. As Quebeckers, we are just as representatives of the population, and this is a choice that we made.

We selected the proper words, precisely to avoid being accused of partisanship. Had we said “Quebec forms a nation”, that would have meant that we wanted to declare Quebec is a country. Instead, we decided to say “Quebeckers form a nation”, so as to accurately reflect the motion passed by the Quebec National Assembly, to the effect that the Quebec people forms a nation.

So, we did not want a partisan debate. The partisan debate will take place in Quebec, and it is not up to the hon. member to settle this issue. It will be up to Quebeckers to choose their destiny. I am sorry for the hon. member, but that is how democracy works.

The Supreme Court of Canada even told former prime ministers and the member's own Prime Minister that they would have no option but to negotiate, should Quebeckers opt for sovereignty.

[*English*]

**Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Wascana.

I rise today to take part in the debate on the motion moved by the leader of the Bloc which asks that the House recognize that Quebeckers form a nation. I understand that this is a very emotional issue for some; however, we must debate serious issues and even difficult issues in an atmosphere of respect and tolerance.

My position vis-à-vis the Bloc motion is very clear and unequivocal. I will vote against it. As the leader of the official opposition said yesterday in the House, how could we ever support a motion on Quebec by a party that has zero commitment to Canada and which is blind to the greatness available for Quebeckers within Canada?

There are many people in Quebec who strongly believe in Canada and want to be full participants, as well as enjoy all the benefits that come from being part of one of the greatest countries in the world. Canada is richer and a more vibrant nation for having Quebec and that is why I take great pride in rising to say why I object to the motion, even though I happen to be from Kitchener Centre which is a southern Ontario riding.

I recognize that the duality of Canada goes back to the two founding nations, the cultures and the two religions that has led us to be an incredibly rich and tolerant country that I believe impacts the lives of all Canadians. It makes Canada a beacon of hope to the world of how we can live together in peace, and not just tolerate diversity but celebrate it.

There are many federalists and even nationalists in Quebec who believe in Canada and who are committed to a strong Quebec within a strong and united Canada. Liberals have always believed that Quebec, with all its resources, can prosper and meet its dreams within a united Canada.

Yesterday in the House the leader of the Bloc, and the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, stated during ministerial statements:

The debate on Quebec's future hinges on whether, as some believe, Quebec is better off growing and prospering within Canada...—or whether, as others like me believe, sovereignty is the only way for Quebec to reach its full potential.

Clearly, by the admission of the leader of the Bloc, his party is dedicated to destroying Canada. His party believes that the only way Quebec can reach its full potential is by withdrawing from Canada.

It goes without saying that I, as well as all members in the House, respect the opinions that are expressed in the chamber. However, on the issue that is before us today, I fundamentally disagree with my colleague from the Bloc. I share the view, along with the majority of Quebeckers, that Quebec can reach its full potential within a united Canada.

I will always fight for a united Canada that is based on tolerance, respect and inclusion. Twice through referendums, Quebeckers have rejected leaving Canada. Even with flawed questions, Quebeckers have opted to remain as full partners in a united Canada.

Why does the Bloc choose to ignore these Quebeckers, the ones who have twice rejected proposals to leave this country of Canada? If the Bloc says it speaks on behalf of Quebeckers, why does it ignore the majority who have twice rejected leaving Canada?

It is the point of view of the majority of those Quebeckers that I am speaking to and defending today. Liberals have always believed that when confronted with a clear question, whether or not to be part of Canada, Quebeckers will always choose Canada.

*Business of Supply*

The member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean has proposed an amendment to his leader's motion that implies that Quebec will one day leave Canada because the motion says, following the word "nation", he would add "currently within Canada". Clearly, there is a ticking time bomb here as far as the Bloc is concerned.

• (1315)

The suggestion that Canada could be united now but not in the future must be rejected. I will not support any amendment that implies in whole or in part that Canada will one day not be united.

My party, the Liberal Party of Canada, and I will always fight for a strong and united Canada. I believe a strong Quebec can prosper within a strong Canada.

In December 1995 the House voted on a resolution recognizing that Quebec is a distinct society within Canada. This resolution was proposed by the Liberal Party. I am proud that my party stood in the House and recognized that Quebec is a distinct society within Canada.

The Bloc MPs in the House that day voted against the Liberal resolution recognizing Quebec as a distinct society within Canada. It is true, when the Bloc members had the chance to vote in the House in favour of Quebec being recognized as a distinct society, they voted against that recognition.

One must ask, what are the motives for the motion that we have before us today? There is broad agreement that all parties of the House—and I think that was demonstrated yesterday and I would have to say that yesterday was probably one of the most historic days that I have spent in Parliament—recognize Quebecers as a nation. The motivation then becomes suspect when we see the amendment that was put forward by the Bloc today. It is quite clear that the Bloc's motives are to tear apart Canada.

Soon all of Canada will be celebrating the 400th anniversary of the founding of the city of Quebec by Champlain. Quebec's history is a rich history. It is part of Canada's history. I know that I will be proud to celebrate that 400th anniversary, as will all Canadians across this land.

I would like to take one moment to further reflect on something that was raised by my colleague, the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie earlier today when she was speaking to the motion. She talked about the Bloc's motive. What could it be? What was its purpose? She said that in her view the Bloc is trying to divide federalists. The Bloc members want not only to divide federalists and those who believe in a strong and united Canada, but they are continuing to keep Quebecers divided by refusing to acknowledge that the majority of Quebecers believe Quebec can reach its full potential within Canada.

As my leader said yesterday, the Bloc's *raison d'être* is the breakup of Canada. The motion before us, once again, is an attempt to divide rather than to unite. It is pure politics. These tactics and attempts by the Bloc must be rejected. This is simply another demonstration of the Bloc playing games, games of which I refuse to be a part.

In closing, it is important to rise above partisanship and political games, and defend the interests of all Canadians, including those Quebecers who have twice rejected leaving Canada. It is equally

important to adopt a solution that allows all of us to reach our full potential, a solution that respects Quebec and Quebecers, and gives them a prosperous future within the most magnificent country.

Let us not be fooled by the politics of the members of the Bloc Québécois. They have no desire to define what Quebecers are. Their objective is to take Quebec out of Canada.

• (1320)

[*Translation*]

I am convinced that Quebecers will always opt for a strong Quebec in a united Canada. That is my objective and duty. I want to ensure that Quebecers can fully thrive within Canada.

**Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a question. She says that Quebec can reach its full potential within Canada. Why then has Quebec not signed the Canadian Constitution? Why has Quebec been fighting for the past 40 years in Canada to be recognized and to put a stop to encroachment on its areas of jurisdiction? If we are so happy and if we can reach our full potential, why do we keep up the fight?

[*English*]

**Hon. Karen Redman:** Mr. Speaker, I look at many of the wonderful agreements we have forged in Quebec.

I think back to my days as parliamentary secretary to the minister of environment and to the great support Quebec had not only for Kyoto, but also its participation in looking at green technology through the green enabling fund, which was administered by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. I know Quebec was a happy participant in that. It signed on to our wonderful child care agreements as well.

When the Liberal Party was government, it did not believe in cookie cutter solutions. That is why we forged the kinds of relationships with all provinces, recognizing that there were different needs.

Quebec has a best practice for child care, and it signed on to that. Quebec has been a full participant of many wonderful initiatives. It has been to the benefit of Quebecers to be part of Canada.

• (1325)

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in participating in this very important debate, I first want to take note of the compelling words of my leader and my deputy leader, the hon. members of the House for Toronto Centre and Westmount—Ville-Marie, who, within the last 24 hours, have spoken so eloquently about Canada and about the vital and dynamic position of les Québécois within a successful and united Canada.

Theirs was a message of inclusion and cohesion, of strength, of hope, of growth. They spoke of how les Québécois can and should be so proud and confident about their Quebec identity, and equally proud and confident about their Canadian identity.

By contrast, the separatist argument from the Bloc today implies that those two identities must, by definition, be mutually exclusive, that les Québécois must ultimately choose one identity or the other, but they cannot have both, and that is a great shame.

Thus the Bloc motion is fundamentally divisive. The motion is also deliberately incomplete. It is potentially confusing, capable, indeed prone, to misinterpretation. The leader of the Bloc essentially confirmed that mischievous intent on his part in the remarks that he made in this House earlier today.

As is its stated goal, the Bloc will seek at all times to engender an environment within which their separatist objectives could be realized, and this motion is part and parcel of that strategy.

We also recall the words of former Premier Parizeau, who said his plan for separatism was to make other Canadians feel their relationship with Quebec was something like a perpetual visit to the dentist. We must not succumb to that game plan, neither the divisiveness nor the contrived painfulness.

We need to focus instead on how to keep building success for les Québécois and for all Canadians, including les Québécois. We need to demonstrate our unique historic Canadian talent and capacity for respect, inclusion and accommodation within this vast country. That may well be our greatest possible gift to the world, the gift from all Canadians, including les Québécois. Indeed, it is probably in no small measure because of les Québécois that our country has developed this talent and this capacity to live, grow and thrive successfully in a diverse context together.

In a troubled world, a divided world, a world where human disputes, strife and anguish are just too prevalent, surely it is a hugely important achievement, a hugely important model, to have the inclusive Canadian success story. Les Québécois have always been integral to that success. It would not have been achieved, indeed it would not have been achievable, without the role and the experience of les Québécois. Together we must not give up on ourselves.

This country covers a vast land mass, spanning the northern part of a vast continent, the second biggest country in the world, with five huge regions and six time zones. We have fantastic geography and topography to admire, to wonder at and to challenge us from coast to coast.

We have all the features on the North American continent tending to run north and south, while we strive to build a country together east and west. We have a difficult and sometimes downright perverse climate, ranging all the way from the North Pole to the same latitude as the state of California, and all of that belongs to all of us.

We have a small but very complicated population, beginning with the aboriginal peoples, then the French explorers and settlers, then the English explorers and settlers and then wave after wave of the most enriching immigration. It is to the point now where we in Canada include every colour, every creed, every ethnic origin, every religion, every political background, crucially and importantly two official languages, many cultures, quite literally the diversity of the whole world all here and mixed together unevenly, not in a melting pot, but as a mosaic and strung out rather sparsely along about 4,000 miles of American boundary.

• (1330)

We can hardly imagine a more difficult or challenging set of circumstances from which to try to forge a country, but we have forged one. It is the envy of the world.

### *Business of Supply*

How have we accomplished that? Yes, with a lot of hard work and also with some generous good luck. Also, we have done it, I believe, primarily through the faithful application of some typically Canadian values and characteristics, like a sense of fairness and justice, a spirit of generosity, compassion, tolerance, sharing, open hearts and open minds, pride in our vast diversity. We have practised the creative art of accommodation so the overall result for all of us can be more, not less.

We have always had that patient willingness to listen to each other, to reach out, to bridge our differences, to try very hard to understand one another. Once we have listened and understood, then we as Canadians have always been prepared to take action with and for each other together, not because any such action is in the narrow self-interest of some comfortable majority, not because we have to, but because we want to, because that action is right for the fair, decent and wonderful country that we aspire to be.

That is the stuff of nation building, and nation building the Canadian way is a never ending process. Canada is today and it always will be a precious work in progress. We must be absolutely resolved to keep on building this great country and to do it always and forever together.

Our opportunities for steadily increasing success for Canadians and for les Québécois and our prospects and opportunities for good fortune would not be possible in our country without the absolutely indispensable skills and values of les Québécois. Those skills and values reach back through out national fabric continuously for more than 400 years. They enrich us today and they will for generations to come.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to have the opportunity to express myself during this debate on the Quebec nation. This is one of the main reasons I decided to run for a seat as a member of the Bloc Québécois in 2004. I forgot to tell you at the beginning that I will be sharing my time with the member for Papineau.

I think that the concept of a nation is very important. This is not an abstract word that people do not really care about, as the Minister of International Cooperation and Minister for la Francophonie said last June 23. Recognizing the existence of the Quebec nation is more than a symbolic gesture; it is not just a label.

We know that nations have rights, especially the right to self-determination, that is, the right to direct their own development.

Two former premiers of Quebec, a federalist and a sovereignist, Robert Bourassa and René Lévesque, agreed on this issue. René Lévesque once said:

Having all the attributes of a distinct national community, Quebec has an inalienable right to self-determination. This is Quebec's most basic right.

Robert Bourassa, a federalist, had this to say about self-determination:

English Canada must clearly understand that, no matter what, Quebec is today and for all times a distinct society, free and capable of assuming its destiny and its development.

*Business of Supply*

The right to self-determination is also codified by the UN. Resolution 26.25 adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1970 describes it best.

The Bélanger-Campeau Commission, which was set up in Quebec after the failure of the Meech Lake Accord and chaired by a federalist and a sovereigntist, agreed with this. Some of its findings, unfortunately, are still current because we have not really ended the impasse between federalists and sovereigntists. The Bélanger-Campeau Commission said:

The consensus expressed in the work of the commission is clear: profound changes to Quebec's political and constitutional status are needed.

This has not been done. It also said:

Only two solutions are open to Quebec in redefining its status: firstly, making a new, last, attempt to redefine its status within the federal system; and, secondly, achieving sovereignty.

As soon as Quebecers are recognized as a nation only two options are open to us. In presenting this motion, the Bloc Québécois is not saying it wants to achieve sovereignty. What we are saying is that there needs to be a major renewal of federalism on a new foundation or there needs to be sovereignty. Those two options are available. But can federalism truly be reformed? Some 40 years of fighting make me doubt it.

Currently all these avenues seemed to be blocked. The only door that is still open, at least for Quebecers and for the Bloc Québécois, is sovereignty.

Since Quebecers are a nation they have to be able to have a say on the world stage in their areas of jurisdiction. For more than 40 years now, all the Governments of Quebec have asked to be able to engage in international relations directly themselves on their own behalf where Quebec's jurisdictions under the Constitution are concerned. For more than 40 years now we have made little progress in all these debates. Quebec participates in only one international organization, namely the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie. This is not thanks to the federal government, but on the insistence of France, General de Gaulle in particular.

During the last election campaign, the Prime Minister promised that Quebec would have its own seat at UNESCO, along the lines of the francophone summit. What we are seeing is Quebec left with only a folding chair, rather than a seat, and since the signing over six months ago, which was all for show, no concrete action has been taken.

The Prime Minister also promised that, on the international level, Quebec, as well as the other provinces, though they see less need for it, would have a say in matters affecting their own jurisdictions. We saw in Nairobi, Kenya, during the United Nations climate change conference just what his promise was worth. Quebec was given no voice at that conference. More progressive nations heard about Quebec's plan only because a European minister talked about it.

• (1335)

And the Conservative government only accused her of interfering in Canada's domestic affairs.

The Prime Minister also promised to recognize special cultural and institutional responsibilities of the Quebec government. We are

still awaiting the asymmetrical agreement that would allow Quebec to speak for itself on matters under its jurisdiction.

The Prime Minister promised the following:

I am ready to discuss mechanisms to enable the provinces to extend their jurisdictions on the international scene.

How many times, since the election of this new government, has Quebec been allowed to freely exercise its own jurisdictions on the international scene?

The Bloc Québécois would like to assert three principles. The government cannot pretend that it has respected its promises in these three areas.

First, Quebec is not like the other provinces. Rather, it is home to the Quebec nation. For this reason, it requires greater autonomy than the other provinces, including on the international scene.

Second, within its constitutional jurisdictions, Quebec is fully sovereign. It must be permitted to exercise its authority from A to Z, including in international relations.

Third, when negotiating on the international scene in matters affecting jurisdictions under Quebec's own legislative authority, the federal government cannot claim to represent Quebec, unless Quebec authorizes it to do so.

Subordination has plenty of disadvantages. It prevents the Quebec nation from fully developing and realizing its full potential. It is neither normal nor desirable for Quebec to be a province of another nation. Legally, Quebec must be on an equal footing with other countries. That is the Bloc Québécois' opinion.

Obviously, the motion put forward by the Bloc Québécois is not asking that the House decide whether or not Quebec should choose sovereignty. What we are asking is that it recognizes that Quebecers form a nation. As for Quebec's political future, the decision will be made in Quebec, in a referendum that will be held in the purest democratic traditions, as Quebec has always done.

For the benefit of the many sovereigntists in my riding, I would like to talk about the advantages of sovereignty. Why would we choose the sovereigntist option for Quebec and why would we work so hard to achieve sovereignty? We all want to be free and responsible, both personally and collectively, as Quebecers do form a nation. We want to face our own internal and external problems, solve them ourselves and gain from it experience, dynamism and the richness of being, all this in a spirit of healthy cooperation with our neighbours, whom we respect, but without the sterile blockage that has existed for too long between Quebec's normal dynamism and the check Ottawa is putting on that.

I want to pay my taxes to the Quebec government that sits at the National Assembly. I want the National Assembly to make the laws that govern the country of Quebec. I want representatives from Quebec at the table in international meetings to debate and sign agreements and treaties that will have an impact on the lives of Quebecers.

*Business of Supply*

Quebeckers have the means as well as the obligations of a sovereign people. Two neighbours who each have their own house get along better than those who have to share accommodations where the boundaries are blurred. A sovereign Quebec next to a sovereign Canada will better contribute to the well-being of both neighbours.

• (1340)

[English]

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the member's comments and I am little bit puzzled.

A few minutes ago I was listening to the member for Papineau, who is also a member of the Bloc. He was vigorously stating that this was not a partisan motion which the Bloc brought forward, that there was no hidden agenda, that it was just a clarification of Quebec rights.

Yet I heard the member for Trois-Rivières make comments about how she favours sovereignty. She would like to see Quebec as an independent nation. She talked about wanting to be free as a separate nation. She spoke about wanting to be able to sign contracts and agreements apart from Canada.

It certainly sounds from her comments that the motion her party has put forward is indeed partisan and does reflect a very clear sovereignist agenda. Yet her colleague in the Bloc stated the exact opposite. He simply claimed that the motion was non-partisan and there was no hidden agenda. So which is it?

• (1345)

[Translation]

**Ms. Paule Brunelle:** Mr. Speaker, let me make myself clear: this is certainly not a partisan motion because it asks us to recognize that Quebeckers form a nation.

Our colleagues opposite cannot pretend to be surprised that we are a sovereignist party.

In talking about this issue, I am obviously sharing my aspirations and those of my fellow citizens with regard to the future of Quebec. It is also evident that we must separate the two concepts: to be a nation is one thing; deciding Quebec's status is another, and that issue will be debated elsewhere, certainly not here in the House of Commons.

[English]

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to rephrase it and ask the same question. The member talked about there being no hidden agenda and the motion being non-partisan. The motion is clearly as partisan as it can get. I was born at night, but it was not last night.

The member said that it is non-partisan and it is only wording, but then she went on to say that clearly Quebec needs to separate in her view. How could anything be more partisan or more contradictory than that, from the comments of her colleague who said that it was just words and it meant nothing. That is baloney. Please clarify your intentions.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** I remind the hon. member for Edmonton Centre to direct his questions through the Chair.

[Translation]

**Ms. Paule Brunelle:** Mr. Speaker, what I find to be partisan is the opportunism of the Conservative government, which is seeking to win over Quebec voters and to throw the Liberal Party into confusion on the eve of its convention. That is being partisan.

Everyone is aware of and talking about recognizing Quebec as a nation. We have a common territory and language, a Civil Code and the desire to live together. Thus, we are a nation. It is a fact and this has no political or legal implications other than what is stated. We are a nation. Period.

[English]

**Mr. Ken Epp (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know if I am different from other members in the House, but I have at least a small need to be liked. I feel better if people like me.

When I think of this wonderful country to which our grandparents brought us, and I kept hearing when I was a youngster all the wonderful stories about how glad they were to be in Canada. They were very grateful. They came from a country where, frankly, they were persecuted.

I think of Canada now as a family. In that regard, families need each other as members. We need to have Quebec and all of its people in our family called the confederation of Canada. Although they do not want to admit it, or at least the separatist faction of them do not want to admit it, they also need us. We work so well together as a confederation. We can cooperate with—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** The hon. member for Trois-Rivières has 30 seconds to answer.

[Translation]

**Ms. Paule Brunelle:** Mr. Speaker, I did not really understand the question. I will say that if he would like us to like him then I am prepared to like him.

I get along with others quite readily. However, I will say to him that I would like to be understood too. To understand me, one must be able to accept others unconditionally and to be able to understand what we represent, what we desire, we Quebeckers, and try to get it straight and to really understand what we mean when we say that we are a nation, that is what we are. Try to like us and to understand us.

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the motion that we Quebeckers from the Bloc Québécois tabled in this House today reads as follows:

That this House recognize that Quebeckers form a nation.

What we want to debate is the recognition of the fact that we, in Quebec, form a nation, nothing more and nothing less. The Prime Minister deemed appropriate to add the mention, “within a united Canada”. We are prepared to present an amendment that would say, “currently within Canada”. Indeed, we recognize that we are within Canada and that, currently, Canada forms a country. As people know, we Quebeckers want something else. When we say that we want Quebec to be recognized as a nation, we are asking that this feature of Quebec be recognized. This does not question the features of the other nation, and it does not put an end to anything. It is simply a matter of recognition. This recognition should be treated with a little more respect than it has been so far.

*Statements by Members*

Does the Prime Minister realize that by adding “within a united Canada”, he will trigger issues about Canada's unity? We consider that Quebec is a nation and, regardless of what anyone may say, that is our reality. The other parties should try to understand that. In my view, this is a tactic, but people will not be fooled by it.

The Prime Minister and the other parties are interpreting the intention that we had when we proposed this motion. Yesterday, in his speech, the Prime Minister said:

—the real intent behind the motion by the leader of the Bloc and the sovereignist camp is perfectly clear. It is to recognize not what the Québécois are, but what the sovereignists would like them to be.

In this regard, it seems to me that we are the only ones who can tell what our intentions are. The Prime Minister really cannot know those intentions, and by presenting things in this fashion, he is attempting to get us stuck with a vision that is not ours. We have a right to consider that Quebec is a nation, with or without Canada.

In Quebec, there has for years been a consensus that Quebecers form a nation. On October 30, 2003, the National Assembly of Quebec unanimously passed the following motion:

THAT the National Assembly reaffirm that the people of Quebec form a nation.

The motion does not say that we form a nation if we remain in Canada. Neither does it say that we form a nation if we leave Canada. It says that we form a nation, period. The National Assembly is stating that it reaffirms the existence of the nation of Quebec. In fact, this resolution echoes what governments of Quebec have been saying for decades. I will read some quotes from governments of Quebec.

In April 1946, Maurice Duplessis said:

I firmly believe that Canadian confederation is a pact of union between two great races.

In November 1963, Jean Lesage said:

Quebec is not defending the principle of provincial autonomy because a principle is involved, but for the more important reason that it views autonomy as the concrete condition not for its survival, which is henceforth assured, but for its affirmation as a people.

For his part, Daniel Johnson Sr. said in February 1968:

The Constitution should not have as its sole purpose to federate territories, but also to associate in equality two linguistic and cultural communities, two founding peoples, two societies, two nations, in the sociological meaning of the term.

Later, René Lévesque said:

—Canada is composed of two equal nations; Quebec is the home and the heart of one of those nations and, as it possesses all the attributes of a distinct national community, it has an inalienable right to self-determination... This right to control its own national destiny is the most fundamental right that Quebec society has.

• (1350)

In December 1994, Jacques Parizeau, to whom the Prime Minister referred yesterday, said:

To date, Canada's basic law has failed to recognize Quebecers as a nation, a people or even a distinct society.

That is a sad commentary.

Finally, in October 1999, Lucien Bouchard said:

Quebec is the only majority francophone society on the North American continent with a well-defined land base and political institutions which it controls. The Quebec people has all the classic attributes of a nation... The Quebec people adheres to the

democratic concept of a nation characterized by its language, French, and a diverse culture, and which is broadly open to international immigration—

The product of immigration myself, I am one of those who have been welcomed on Quebec soil as a full-fledged Quebecker. I have been here since 1967. I can therefore echo the last part of what Mr. Bouchard said and confirm that the Quebec people to whom I proudly belong “adheres to the democratic concept of a nation characterized by its language, French, and a diverse culture, and which is broadly open to international immigration”.

This goes to show that Quebec has been a nation for quite some time. We are not interested in forming a nation provided that we remain within Canada. No one should force a people to stay in a system that it does not believe in. Things will unfold democratically. But what we are looking for today is full and complete recognition of what we are, nothing more, nothing less.

• (1355)

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to address the House in this debate that has to do with the motion that the Prime Minister tabled yesterday. As a Quebecker from Beauce and a Canadian, I am very proud to recognize, as do all my colleagues in the House, that Quebec does form a nation within Canada.

My question is for my colleague from the Bloc Québécois. On several occasions, Quebecers have democratically recognized themselves as being a nation, a nation within Canada.

I am wondering about the Bloc Québécois' willingness to constantly question democratic decisions made by Quebecers over the years with regard to their future.

I am happy to see and to state that Quebecers have decided to stay within this country and to form a nation of which they are very proud. They are proud Quebecers and fine Canadians.

Why is the Bloc Québécois always hell-bent—and has been for years—on forcing Quebecers down a path they have refused to take on several occasions?

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot:** Mr. Speaker, I too am happy to respond to my colleague and to tell him that we are indeed within Canada. That is stating the obvious.

We, the 50 members of the Bloc Québécois, would not be here if we were not within Canada. The redundancy only accentuates the fact that there may be something fishy here. The fact that motives are being impugned to us is also part of the game. It is like an old movie that is shown to us again and again, but this time we will not be fooled.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### VANIER CUP

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this Saturday, November 25, at Saskatoon's Griffiths Stadium, the University of Saskatchewan Huskies will go head to head with the University of Laval for the coveted Vanier championship.

*Statements by Members*

By keeping their eye on the ball, the Huskies have made their way to the top of Canadian university football, one victory at a time. Through teamwork and a tight defensive game, the Huskies have advanced to the finals once again.

I congratulate PotashCorp and its president and CEO, Bill Doyle, as well as the University of Saskatchewan and its president, Peter MacKinnon, for their commitment and leadership in bringing the cup to Saskatoon. They had a vision, just as a quarterback sees the winning play before he throws the ball.

The excitement is building. It is the first time the Vanier Cup has been played outside of the province of Ontario. It is a fitting tribute to Saskatoon's centennial year and will kick off next year's University of Saskatchewan's centennial.

I also thank Paula Cook-Dinan from McGill University's women in the house program for bringing the same enthusiasm to my office this week that will enable the Huskies to win the Vanier Cup this weekend.

Go Huskies, go.

\* \* \*

● (1400)

**PUBLICATIONS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Canadian Heritage is causing confusion and concern among the publishers of community newspapers in this country.

In a recent decision, Canada Post announced it would soon be eliminating its \$15 million funding contribution for the publications assistance program. This program in part helps publications defray the cost of delivery to rural residents. This includes community newspapers, such as *The Inverness Oran*, the Port Hawkesbury *Reporter*, the Antigonish *Casket* and *The Guysborough Journal*, papers that are enjoyed by many constituents in my riding.

Even though a 2002 Canadian Heritage commissioned report called this funding "critical to the economic survival" of community newspapers, the minister has so far refused to commit to funding this shortfall. The minister should end this uncertainty, do the right thing and commit to full funding for the delivery of rural community newspapers.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

**Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, November 25 is the UN's International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. This event reminds us that violence against women is a worldwide phenomenon that exists in all societies.

It does not discriminate on the basis of ethnic or social origin or status. Violence against women is the greatest human rights scandal of our time. From birth to death, in war and in peace, states, societies and families subject women to discrimination and violence.

Closer to home, as the representative of the riding of Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, I want to highlight the remarkable work done by

organizations in my riding that work to protect women and put an end to their victimization, including Châteauguay's Éclaircie women's centre, the Re-Source and the sexual assault help centre.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**HOUSING**

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in 2010, Vancouver will host the Olympics with much fanfare but, unless immediate action is taken, the number of homeless people on the street will triple, according to a report by Pivot.

Low income residents are being evicted at an alarming rate in the downtown east side, with over 800 single rooms lost in three years. Abysmal poverty welfare rates mean people are destined to stay homeless, destitute or without support.

It is astounding that VANOC offered \$500,000 to clear the streets for two weeks during the Olympics. I guess it does not care about the before and after.

Why has the Conservative government ignored the critical need to fund a national, sustainable social housing program? The bottom line must be for the three levels of government to make affordable housing a priority. Income splitting will not help those on the streets. Tax cuts will not build housing.

The Olympics is Canada's showcase to the world. Will it also be the shame of a wealthy country that denies the basic necessities of life to its poorest citizens?

\* \* \*

**UKRAINE**

**Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today we remember a crime of history that many have chosen to forget. All too frequently, humanity sinks to such depravity that it wreaks death and destruction on its own. What motivates and drives people to commit such heinous crimes against others might only have understanding given it by the Almighty in the afterlife.

Tens of millions have died in genocide in this past century alone. The genocide that we remember today cost the lives of over seven million who perished in the famine in Ukraine brought on by Stalin in the 1930s. The Ukrainians who were starved to death in a land called the "Breadbasket of Europe" are being remembered today in ceremonies across Canada and the world.

We remember today the victims of the dark side of humanity and hopefully learn to never repeat it again.

*Statements by Members***RON WIEBE AWARD**

**Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, recently in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Mariano Aupilardjuk of Rankin Inlet, Nunavut, received the Ron Wiebe Award for his work in restorative justice.

The award was established in honour of the late Ron Wiebe, former Correctional Service Canada warden, for his outstanding commitment to and leadership in the field of restorative justice.

Aupilardjuk is the first Inuit to receive this prestigious award. I am very proud of him and very proud to know him. Aupilardjuk is an extremely respected elder who has dedicated his life to helping others. He is a man who has reached out to many who are less fortunate and, in this case, to those impacted by violence, whether they are victims or offenders, in order to help them become productive participants in society.

We owe tremendous thanks to this man and to his tremendous knowledge, which he willingly shares. I congratulate Aupilardjuk, who is a great example to all of us with his compassionate approach to others and his community service. I know that I truly do this on behalf of my constituents.

\* \* \*

• (1405)

**JOHN ALLAN CAMERON**

**Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, like all Nova Scotians, I was saddened to learn of the passing of John Allan Cameron, one of Nova Scotia's greatest musicians and the godfather of Celtic music.

Born in Cape Breton in the small community of Glencoe Station, John Allan lost a long battle with bone cancer yesterday. He will be fondly remembered for being our own musical ambassador to the world.

Although I met him several times, I cannot say that we were really good friends, but one would never know that from John Allan. He treated everyone as a special person and his best friend. It is hard to believe that he was 67 years old when he passed on simply because he always acted with such enthusiasm and vigour that people thought he was a much younger man.

We extend our deepest sympathies to John Allan's family and we thank them for sharing him with us. We will never forget John Allan Cameron.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**NOTRE DAME HOSPITAL IN MONTREAL**

**Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is with heartfelt gratitude that I would like to publicly thank the staff and doctors at Notre Dame hospital in Montreal.

On September 14, I underwent a major spinal operation that has enabled me to walk again and to recover most of my physical abilities.

I would like to thank the staff of the fifth floor, C and D wings, from the janitorial staff to the nurses and doctors, my family doctor

Dr. Beaulieu and her replacement, Dr. Bruneau, my oncologist Dr. Charpentier and the tremendous neurosurgeon, Dr. Shédid, as well as his partner, Dr. Boubez, a competent and approachable orthopedic surgeon, and radio-oncologist Dr. Méthot, who was responsible for the accuracy of the radiation that was to destroy the last of the cancer cells without harming the healthy cells, at least, I hope so.

I spent two weeks in that hospital, where wartime medicine and state of the art medicine work hand in hand along with limitless devotion, resourcefulness and absolute competence.

My thanks to all of them.

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[English]

**ROBERT ALTMAN**

**Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we all recognize the power of the silver screen, which reflects who we are while shaping our vision. Robert Altman created entertainment on the silver screen that drew people. Mr. Altman passed away earlier this week in Los Angeles at the age of 81.

Robert Altman, an early champion of the B.C. film industry, helped brand Vancouver as Hollywood north. His 1971 Oscar nominated film, *McCabe & Mrs. Miller*, was filmed in North Vancouver. Thirty-five years later, Vancouver is home to film studios, major blockbuster promotions and one of the most successful film industries in the world.

Altman was prolific, making more than 30 films in the course of his career. He was famous for *Nashville* and the *M\*A\*S\*H* series. A five-time Academy Award nominee for best director, he finally won a lifetime achievement Oscar in 2006.

Robert Altman was a truly unique director and an extraordinary man.

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**AIR SECURITY**

**Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority has told the Thunder Bay Airport that it will not be paying the full operating costs for the whole baggage screening system that was recently installed to comply with security regulations. CATSA will pay only \$70,000 per year of the required \$250,000 per year because it does not have enough funding from the government to pay its own expenses.

The Minister of Finance has an additional \$375 million in air security revenues in a bank account while the government shortchanges Canada's airports instead of paying the bills.

The Thunder Bay Airport must now hike fees 24% to pay to operate CATSA's equipment. What is worse, the extra costs mean a 13% increase on rents payable to the federal government.

I call on the Minister of Finance to provide CATSA with the money it needs to provide and pay for air security at our airports.



*Statements by Members*

●(1410)

**COMMONWEALTH GAMES**

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the community of Halifax is Canada's bid city for the 2014 Commonwealth Games, competing against cities in Scotland and Nigeria.

These games represent a huge opportunity for Halifax-Dartmouth for an international profile, for economic benefit and, most importantly, for recreational infrastructure for our community, particularly the people of Dartmouth North, where Commonwealth Park will be located. All citizens, organizations and elected officials stand up and say loudly that this is a great opportunity and we all support it.

I particularly want to acknowledge today the leadership of Labatt Breweries, makers of Keith's India Pale Ale, which this week committed \$500,000 to support the games, a hugely important contribution.

As our team does its work to bring the games to Halifax, I urge all of my colleagues to champion these games. 2014 will be a great milestone for Halifax. We who like it, like it a lot.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**TRANSPORTATION**

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last week, the new Government of Canada took action to ensure public safety when the Department of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities announced \$37 million to fund safety projects for the six largest urban transportation systems in Canada, including that of Montreal.

The strength of the Bloc, the party in eternal opposition, which will never be able to make a single decision for Quebec, is to throw out grandiose ideas like its high-speed train that will never go anywhere. In the real country of Canada, the Bloc remains silent, however, when Quebec benefits greatly from a federal initiative.

In this case, Montreal is getting \$11.4 million or 30% of the total envelope, 30%, Mr. Speaker. This envelope will be divided between the Société de transport de Montréal, the Agence métropolitaine de transport and CN's central station.

This is just another concrete example of how Conservative members and ministers from Quebec are working in the interest of Quebec—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Hamilton Mountain.

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[English]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this fall the Auditor General slammed the previous Liberal government for its failure to make progress on meeting Kyoto targets. The Conservatives then introduced their so-called clean air act, which, quite frankly, stinks.

Now the verdict from the UN climate change conference in Nairobi is in. Canada was embarrassed by placing second last in a comparison of national government policies to reduce greenhouse gas pollution in 56 industrialized countries.

Canadians are left yearning for leadership on an issue that they know is of crucial importance, both to the health of their families and the health of their communities.

Fortunately I live in Hamilton, where our community leaders are well ahead of the government in making a real commitment to reduce greenhouse gases. Groups like Environment Hamilton, Green Venture and Transportation for Liveable Communities are all taking steps to tackle climate change. They are variously engaged in promoting energy conservation, planting trees, banning toxic chemicals, exploring alternative transportation and supporting the Hamilton Eat Local Project.

I am proud to support their efforts by pushing for concrete action in the House of Commons. I look forward to the day that the NDP's plan to halt climate change is finally adopted as government policy. Kyoto and Canadians deserve nothing less.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**LÉON DEBIEN**

**Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, November 19, the Lionel-Groulx college in Sainte-Thérèse conferred the 2006 honorary degree on Léon Debien in recognition of his exceptional contribution to achieving the mission of that institution.

Mr. Debien has been living in my riding for 41 years. He was the first principal at the Lionel-Groulx CEGEP and was head of educational services there for five years from 1967 to 1972.

This college was one of the first 12 CEGEPs created by the Government of Quebec. CEGEPs were formed in response to a recommendation in the Parent report and was the first step in a major national project for the democratization of education in Quebec.

Léon Debien has met a number of challenges through his ability to listen to and respect others. He is one of the pioneers who contributed to the development of this college. I want to congratulate him, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois.

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[English]

**COMMUNITY ACCESS PROGRAM**

**Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, recent Conservative cuts demonstrate a willingness to push back progress by denying Canadians the basic skills and opportunities they need to fully succeed in today's society. This callous attitude is further demonstrated in the government's failure to come clean about the future of the Community Access Program.

### Oral Questions

In Nova Scotia alone, CAP provides affordable public Internet service in 279 communities. It has engaged volunteers, provided skills training to youth and seniors and ensured public access to online government services and valuable health information.

The Minister of Industry tells us his department is currently examining options for the long term future of the program, but stakeholders have been shut out of the process.

The chair of the Nova Scotia CAP association has stated that members were used to an open dialogue with their federal partners but now it seems as though they are waiting to see how their future will be decided for them.

Open discussion and input from the network partners is imperative. There has been an overwhelming reaction to the uncertainty of this invaluable program.

\* \* \*

• (1415)

#### ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION

**Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Saturday, November 11 was Remembrance Day. Like hundreds of thousands of Canadians, I took the time to attend a Remembrance Day ceremony, which was held in Fort Qu'Appelle in my riding. The Legion there produced a great ceremony that honoured the sacrifices made by so many men and women for their country.

Our veterans fought for the freedoms we enjoy today. The very fact that I am able to stand in this place as an elected representative is thanks to their sacrifices.

There is a Legion hall in almost every town in my riding. They are responsible for keeping the memories alive and reminding us of veterans' contributions. Regina itself is home to Royal Canadian Legion No. 1 and this year marks its 80th anniversary.

I want to thank all the members of the Legion who gave of their time to help mark a very special Remembrance Day.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

### TAXATION

**Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, thanks to successive Liberal governments, the Prime Minister is in a great position to provide tax fairness, including major tax cuts, for all Canadians. Unfortunately, despite the \$13 billion surplus, all we have seen so far are the government's cuts to programs for literacy, women and the disabled. The problem is the government's tax policy is driven by right-wing ideology and political opportunism rather than the best interests of the Canadian economy.

When will the Prime Minister end this ideological approach that favours some Canadians over others? When will he introduce tax cuts that apply fairly to all Canadians?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a day of revelations when the Liberal Party now comes

out in favour of tax cuts. That party had a lot of chances to cut taxes. Instead, it hoarded surpluses and cut money from the provinces.

This party is doing the opposite. This party cut 29 taxes in the last budget, including the GST, a tax cut for every single person. Shamefully, that party opposed those tax cuts.

**Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, while the finance minister was complaining yesterday about how mean the federal Liberals were to him when he was Ontario's finance minister, as if that were responsible for the fact that his record in Ontario was an unmitigated disaster, our taxes have gone up by over \$1 billion in this country.

Now, along with the Prime Minister, he is putting forward policies that are nothing more than the same Conservative discriminatory policies that failed in the Mike Harris government.

Why is a working single woman any less deserving of a major income tax cut? Why is an unmarried senior treated less fairly than other seniors?

When will the Conservatives stop manipulating our tax system and instead offer real tax breaks to all Canadians who—

**The Speaker:** The right hon. the Prime Minister.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in the last budget the Minister of Finance introduced a working tax credit for every single working Canadian. Just recently in his tax fairness program the Minister of Finance introduced a tax reduction, an increase to the age exemption for every single senior citizen in this country.

The only party to oppose those things, the only party to ever oppose tax fairness for Canadians is the Liberal Party.

[Translation]

**Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is unbelievable. A short time ago, we heard that we supported their budget. Did we support it? Finally, they understood. We do not agree with their vision of Canada in fiscal matters. That is clear.

Thanks to the previous Liberal government, this Conservative government inherited a fiscal situation that is the envy of the world. Instead of allowing all Canadians to benefit from it in a way that is fair, they prefer to take advantage of the situation to change our society based on their neo-conservative vision.

The government has enough money to offer all taxpayers a considerable tax break. Why are all Canadians not benefiting from tax reductions that are fair to everyone? What is wrong with taxes—

• (1420)

**The Speaker:** The right hon. Prime Minister.

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this government has cut taxes for all Canadians. This party reduced the GST, a tax paid by all Canadians. This party gave every worker in this country a tax credit. This party cut taxes by increasing the tax credit for every senior.

The only party that opposes these measures is the Liberal Party of Canada, which voted in favour of a tax rate of zero for large companies in this country.

\* \* \*

**GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS**

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, thanks to the prudent fiscal management of the previous Liberal government, the Prime Minister was able to make expensive promises to Quebec last December. Even though we have a surplus, he prefers to cut programs that help the most disadvantaged and to reduce federal support to the Government of Quebec.

Why is the Prime Minister withholding \$800 million for day care and \$300 million for the Kyoto protocol from Quebec?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this party has given a family allowance to every Quebec family. That is important. In addition, it is the Liberal Party that was opposed to giving these benefits to all Quebec families.

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance, and now the Prime Minister himself, has the nerve to say that the transfers have increased. The increases he mentioned are those made by the previous Liberal government, such as the \$41 billion increase in health transfers.

Does the Prime Minister realize that when he says that the transfers increased he is paying tribute to the previous Liberal government?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, everyone knows the story of the Liberal Party of Canada and its cuts in provincial transfers, its health cuts. It is the only Canadian government to have ever made cuts to health transfers.

This government has increased transfers to Quebec and given a historic role to Quebec at UNESCO. Our party is opposed to the centralist leanings of the Liberal Party of Canada.

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**QUEBECKERS**

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, there are currently two motions that were tabled in this House and that deal with the recognition of the Quebec nation. Everyone agrees on just one point: Quebecers form a nation.

Given that, will the Prime Minister admit that Quebecers form a nation?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there are now three motions, including two that were tabled by the Bloc Québécois. That party made its decision. Our own decision on this issue is very clear: Quebecers form a nation within a united Canada, and this is important.

It is important because Quebecers participated in the founding and development of this country, and they will participate in its future, because the Canadian identity is part of the Quebec identity.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am asking the Prime Minister to set aside partisanship and admit that, regardless—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** Are they done, Mr. Speaker?

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie has the floor to put a question.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** Mr. Speaker, will he admit that, regardless of what our options may be in the future, regardless of what happens in Quebec, regardless of what Quebecers decide, Quebecers form a nation now and forever?

● (1425)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois leader is once again talking about partisanship. The reality is that three parties in this House support the government's motion. The ADQ and the PLQ also support it. Only Bloc members and PQ members are unanimously opposed to it. This is important, because Quebecers are fed up with this debate. They want respect for the Quebec nation, and they also want to participate in this country, which is the best country in the world.

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is entitled to his opinions and that is precisely what we call for in the House. He is entitled to his opinions and we are entitled to ours. One fact remains, however. The Prime Minister said so, the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities said so, and the Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec said so, and this fact is that our government recognizes that Quebecers form a nation.

Why not just say so clearly, without any tricks? It is a fact, it is reality, one recognizes it and says so unambiguously.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it was the Bloc Québécois that asked me to take a position and we did. We take the same position today as we did yesterday, unlike the Bloc Québécois. Our position is clear, namely that the Canadian identity is an essential part of the Quebec nation.

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister doubtless forgets that in a decision handed down not so long ago, the Supreme Court of Canada recognized the legitimacy of all the political options, including the legitimacy of the sovereignists advocating and promoting their point of view and finally triumphing democratically.

Will the Prime Minister admit that the concept of a Quebec nation—the Québécois forming a nation—does not depend on any conditions or tricks or strategies but on what we really are? We would like him to recognize that.

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we respect the minority position, but if we want to pass a motion on the Quebec reality, we have to accept the whole truth. The reality is that Quebecers form a nation within a united Canada. Twice the Bloc and Parti Québécois put this question to Quebecers and twice the people of Quebec gave their answer. They are part of Canada and will continue to be part of Canada.

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[English]

**GOVERNMENT POLICIES**

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that increasingly working families out there are finding it harder and harder to get by. Now we face a continued lack of investment by the federal government in key areas. The result is we see drug prices going up. We see the costs of sending young people to university and college going up. We see even the cost of putting a roof over people's heads skyrocketing. This of course was the tradition of the former government as well.

Now the question has got to be, will the Prime Minister address the needs, health care lists that are getting longer, infrastructure that is failing and crumbling, by having a balanced approach and—

**The Speaker:** The right hon. the Prime Minister.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is why this government has taken many steps to increase the disposable income of Canadians by reducing their taxes, by providing to every working Canadian in this country a tax credit that will grow over the next two years. It is why this government has invested in child care, why it is investing in infrastructure.

I think it is ultimately why the House passed this government's budget with the support ultimately of the NDP.

[Translation]

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, does the Prime Minister realize that bridges cannot be repaired with tax cuts, or nurses hired or daycare spaces created? The Conservative government is turning its back on the families of ordinary working people.

Why will the Prime Minister not take a balanced approach and invest in programs for the families of working people and their communities?

• (1430)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, the approach taken by this government is a balanced approach. There are tax cuts and investments in important social programs. We have also paid off a lot of debt. This is essential to the development of the country and we pursue these policies because ordinary working people and their families benefit from them.

[English]

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, 13 years of Liberal economic management turned massive Conservative deficits into surpluses. Now Mike Harris's old minister of deficits who turned a \$2.2 billion surplus in Ontario into a record \$6 billion in the red wants to melt Liberal success into Conservative debt and

slashing, promising more misguided, unaffordable tax cuts than can be counted.

Is the minister going to mislead Canadians again to try to scam more votes, or does he want to join every other Conservative finance minister since 1912 in running a deficit?

**Ms. Diane Ablonczy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite ought to cheer up a little bit. The economic fundamentals of this country are better than they have ever been.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** I do not know whether the hon. Parliamentary Secretary finished her answer or not. If she wished to elaborate further, she would have a few seconds to do so.

**Ms. Diane Ablonczy:** Mr. Speaker, employment is at its highest rate. We were able to pay down the debt by \$13.2 billion. There is tax relief for Canadians of \$20 billion over the next two years.

The member opposite should be cheering. Instead of painting gloom and doom, the Liberals should cheer up.

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I saw what their finance minister did to Ontario. I saw what our minister of finance did for Canada. Successive finance ministers for our government had put our house in order and put us in very strong stead.

The reality is the same man who led the attack on Ontario, the same man who led Ontario into deficit is now leading the attack on literacy funding, women's groups, youth programs, health care waiting times and the environment, and that is just the beginning.

What is next? How much debt, how many slashed services, how many Canadian priorities will be sacrificed to fulfill their neo-conservative agenda?

**Ms. Diane Ablonczy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what a great stump speech for a Liberal election campaign, but it really has no place in the House of Commons. As I mentioned, and I guess the member did not hear me, far from creating more debt, we have paid off debt, \$13.2 billion this year alone.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today the finance minister will show Canadians what he plans to do with the impeccable fiscal situation he inherited from Liberals, but Canadians are worried.

*Oral Questions*

Before Mike Harris became premier, the Ontario economy was leading the nation. Once federal books were balanced, Ontario received huge increases in federal transfers. However, the finance minister spilled red ink all over Ontario: a \$6 billion deficit, an ideological plan to make government small and mean, less help for the poor, tax cuts on borrowed money and deficits.

Is this why he ran away from his record in Ontario?

**Ms. Diane Ablonczy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the words “small” and “mean” could certainly apply to the members opposite, who obviously do not like the fiscal success of a Conservative government. It was able not only to give huge tax relief for overtaxed Canadians, to make large investments in important projects and services for Canadians, but also to pay down over \$13 billion worth of debt this year alone.

• (1435)

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are troubled that the Mike Harris gang is now clutching the purse strings of the Government of Canada. That three-headed monster pulled off an amazing feat: one slashed social services; one increased the number of homeless; and one threw them in jail. They cut environmental protection. They caused Walkerton. They ended up running \$6 billion deficits and they still gave huge tax cuts to the most wealthy. That is not common sense. That is a train wreck.

Does the minister understand why Canadians are rightly worried about this meanspirited government?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are very happy with the financial management of this country by this government, not just for the reasons the parliamentary secretary stated but also because Canadians now know the purse strings are in the hands of people who will not steal the money.

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[Translation]

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, another major military aerospace contract is heading for the United States. Lockheed Martin has just been awarded a contract totalling \$4.9 billion Canadian, for purchase and maintenance of the Hercules CC-130J tactical aircraft.

Does the Minister of National Defence acknowledge that his procurement process excludes all other companies from a potential transaction, and that he is again going against a tendering process that is equitable, fair and transparent, with all of the negative consequences for employment in Quebec, where 55% of the industry is located—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services has the floor.

**Mr. James Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague appears to be unaware of what has been said. I told the leader of the NDP yesterday that the awarding of this contract has yet to be decided. A request for proposal will be issued to the sole bidder qualified. The project is proceeding on schedule.

The plan is for this contract to be awarded in August 2007. So this has not yet been decided.

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, considering Quebec companies make up 55% of the Canadian aeroindustry, can the minister explain why Lockheed Martin should be chosen?

Also, how does the minister explain the fact that, in his letter of intent posted on the Public Works Canada site, he requires Quebec content of no more than 5% of the total contract? That is absolutely unacceptable to Quebec.

**Mr. James Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I just said, the contract is not yet written, not yet drawn up. This will not be decided before August 2007. So I ask my colleague to wait until then.

We will comply with all the processes, as will all those who wish to submit their application for this project. We shall do what we can to ensure the best results for our country.

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**SHIPBUILDING INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the federal policy respecting vessel transfer costs for ship refit systematically penalizes Quebec shipyards. This transfer costs policy is not only unfair to Quebec, it would also appear to be totally arbitrary.

How can the government explain, for example, a 700% increase in transfer costs from 1997 to 2006 for HMCS *Montreal*?

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce to my friend that I recently met with representatives from the Canadian shipbuilding industry. I have listened to their concerns. We have gladly taken cognizance of their claims. That said, we will take action, as this government has always done.

**Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, from the moment that the cost of moving a ship from Halifax to Les Méchins is added, the shipyard in Quebec becomes uncompetitive.

Will the minister admit that, by maintaining this unfair policy, he is basically condemning in advance Quebec shipyards to never getting any major government contracts?

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure the House that our industrial policy for shipbuilding will be in the best interest of all Canadians and all Quebecers.

*Oral Questions*

[English]

**FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS**

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on the subject of the Prime Minister's comments on Liberal versus Conservative management of the economy, I can tell members one thing Canadians know. On the subject of income trusts, Canadians know the Conservative Party told a \$25 billion lie.

Furthermore, on the subject of broken promises, Canadians know the Prime Minister promised to honour the Canada-Ontario agreement and that promise has been broken. Ontario took the Prime Minister at his word. It booked the money in the budget—

• (1440)

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

**Ms. Diane Ablonczy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member knows full well, because he has been told over and over and he has seen it for himself, that the Ontario federal agreement is fully funded. In fact, it was funded for an additional year over what was agreed. The money is there and it will be given to Ontario.

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, like yesterday with the finance minister finance minister, this is a case of totally bogus accounting, where the government counts the same money twice, where the government looks at tax credits paid to all Canadians and counts it as part of the Canada-Ontario agreement. It makes absolutely no sense.

The simple fact is, the Prime Minister's broken promise has punched a \$1.6 billion hole in the budget of Ontario. Ontario booked that money believing the Prime Minister, then the government reneged.

When at last will the Minister of Finance stand up—

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

**Ms. Diane Ablonczy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if Ontario should be worried, it should be worried about the fact that a Conservative government in Ontario took over from the NDP, which had run Ontario into the ground to the point where the debtors were starting to call in their debts in Ontario. Who was running Ontario at the time, who put Ontario in such a mess and who now wants to run our country? It was Bob Rae, who is now a Liberal.

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[Translation]

**TRANSFER PAYMENTS**

**Hon. Jean Lapierre (Outremont, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since the Conservatives came to power, the Government of Quebec has suffered a series of financial setbacks at the hands of Ottawa, with the loss of \$807 million from the child care program and another \$328 million to help solve environmental problems under the Kyoto protocol.

How can the Prime Minister have promised to correct the fiscal imbalance when he has helped increase the fiscal imbalance by over \$1 billion?

Under the Conservatives, the Government of Quebec has over \$1 billion less than it had under the government—

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

[English]

**Ms. Diane Ablonczy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member knows very well that the fiscal imbalance is very much on the government's agenda, although it was not on his government's agenda. The Liberals denied that it even happened and that there was a problem.

Discussions are ongoing. The Minister of Finance of Canada will be meeting with his provincial counterparts in December. These discussions will be fruitful. The fiscal imbalance will be addressed, and the member knows that.

[Translation]

**Hon. Jean Lapierre (Outremont, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, how can the hon. member say that when, instead of solving the problem of the fiscal imbalance, the Conservatives are in the process of increasing the fiscal imbalance with the Government of Quebec because of their decisions to cut \$800 million from child care and \$328 million from environmental programs? Instead of making things better, they are making them worse. The Government of Quebec is losing ground under this Conservative government.

How can the parliamentary secretary have the nerve to tell us that the Conservatives are solving the problem when they are making matters worse?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, this government has increased transfers to the provinces, including Quebec. What is more, this government has given money to taxpayers in Quebec and to every family with our new family allowance.

The real question is this: how can the member talk about the fiscal imbalance when he does not even believe the fiscal imbalance exists?

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[English]

**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the police, the Ontario attorney general, victims and ordinary Canadians have called for a tougher bail scheme for criminals who commit firearms offences.

During the last election, the Conservative Party promised to impose a reverse onus on bail for gun crimes, a promise that was copied by the Liberal Party and the NDP. Today we took action on this issue.

Could the Minister of Justice please tell the House why this bill is important and why it is required to ensure the safety of Canadians first and foremost?

●(1445)

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, gun crime is indeed a menace to public safety. Protecting Canadians must be the first consideration in granting bail.

The Supreme Court of Canada has recognized there are situations where the reverse onus is necessary, for example, in drug trafficking cases. However, getting serious about our bail laws helps us tackle the serious gun and gang problems that plague our communities.

The Liberals and the NDP made a promise during the last election. They have slipped on their other election promises. We can only hope that they will keep this promise.

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#### CANADIAN HERITAGE

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Glenn O'Farrell, president of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters, made a provocative speech in Vancouver last week. It was widely seen as a corporate shot across the bows to get the CRTC to let the broadcasters off the hook from paying into the television development fund. Mr. O'Farrell, by the way, was the host of the minister's 2005 fundraiser.

The fact that the minister is dragging her feet on renewal of the Canadian television fund, is that a case of he who pays the piper is calling her tune?

**Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government supports the production industry and our broadcasting industry. We understand the importance of the television fund and the role it plays. The fund is being processed in consideration.

We want to ensure that the money will be used and that it provides value for the dollars.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I did not quite hear a yes or a no. I would like to hear a yes.

However, I figure I might as well turn my attention to the President of the Treasury Board for help. If he could take his bright shining light and shine it into the dark places recessed in the heritage department, could he answer two questions?

First, were the cheques for last week's cancelled fundraiser collected in cash? Second, would he give us a list of who gave those cheques so we can at least know who is helping to write the broadcast and copyright policy in our country?

**The Speaker:** I am not sure the cheques the hon. member is referring to are government cheques or party fundraising cheques, but since the President of the Treasury Board is rising to answer, perhaps we will hear what he has to say.

**Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I should tell my friend from Timmins—James Bay that thus far no member of the Conservative Party has had any excuse, or any reason, or any cause to have to return money to taxpayers, unlike the million dollar cheque that had to be returned to the taxpayers by the Liberal Party when Justice Gomery unveiled corruption in the Liberal Party.

#### Oral Questions

With respect to his question, the cheques were returned.

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#### MANITOBA ECONOMY

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the previous Liberal government signed the Canada-Manitoba labour market partnership agreement. It was an investment that ensured the growth and development of the Manitoba workforce. This minority government has not honoured it, thus jeopardizing Manitoba's labour needs. As always, it has promised more and delivered less for the people of Manitoba.

Could the regional minister for Manitoba explain why he has done nothing to honour the signed agreements dedicated to fostering growth in Manitoba?

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is a party that made all kinds of promises to the people of Manitoba and delivered absolutely nothing. It indicated that there was money ready for the floodway. The money was not there. I have been very proud to serve with this government trying to rectify the mistakes of 13 long years under that Liberal government.

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Manitoba did well under the previous government.

Who on the government side is now minding Manitoba? The labour market partnership agreement has not been honoured. The Canadian Wheat Board is being attacked. Lake Winnipeg, the east-west power grid and floodway bridge infrastructure have all been ignored. The silence from the Manitoba Conservatives is deafening.

How many more blows must the province of Manitoba suffer at the hands of this minority government before one of the Conservative sheep stands and says, "No more"?

●(1450)

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that it was that member, the member for Winnipeg South Centre, and the prior member, Reg Alcock, who promised the people of Manitoba that there would be \$350 million there waiting for the floodway.

When we got there, the cupboard was bare. There was not even an agreement in place. We have had to find the money from the minister of infrastructure, and transport. That member should be ashamed of herself for 13 years of a government that did nothing.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**HEALTH**

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this Conservative minority government has abandoned Canadians. It promised to solve the emergency room wait times problem, but it did not keep its promise. The government has done nothing at all to help Canadians who are sick and waiting for operations. All they did was pass the buck to the provinces without giving them the money they need.

Will the Minister of Health stop spouting rhetoric and finally admit that he has done nothing to help sick Canadians?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is not true. This government has shown leadership on health issues. In the Conservative government's 2006 budget, there was more funding for hospitals, doctors and nurses. This is the kind of leadership our country needs.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if doing nothing is showing leadership, then this government is a big problem for Canadians. Has the government reduced wait times? No.

Has the government provided more money to reduce wait times? No.

Is reducing wait times still one of this government's five priorities? No.

They have been in power for nearly a year now, and Canadians are still waiting for them to keep their promises.

Why will the Minister of Health not admit that he has abandoned the sick? Why are the minister and his government once again persecuting the most vulnerable members of our society: the sick? Why?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last Monday, I made a major announcement in Toronto concerning pregnant aboriginal women. This is proof of our leadership on the issue of wait times guarantees. This is the first announcement of its kind.

The former Liberal government did not show leadership and did not take action on wait times. We are proud that the current government is showing leadership for Canada.

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**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the work done by Transport Canada to make the dock at Pointe-au-Père safe jeopardized the sea water intake at the Institut des sciences de la mer aquaculture station at Rimouski. The Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec finally understood—when the situation had been clear for several months—that the situation was urgent and that he had to get involved in this matter.

Given that an announcement is imminent, does the Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of

Quebec intend to establish, in the near future, a schedule for the work that is needed to move the sea water intake, this infrastructure being absolutely essential to the development of the Technopole maritime du Québec in Rimouski?

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the authorities have in fact informed us about this problem arising from the work that has to be done on the dock. The question of the water intake is extremely important to the operation.

Progress continues to be made in this matter, and we will be in a position to make more specific announcements at the appropriate time.

\* \* \*

**FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

**Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the seal hunt has recently been the victim of an enormous propaganda effort by various groups opposed to the hunt. A number of celebrities from other countries went public to denounce the hunt, going as far as to use disinformation.

Knowing that the seal hunt is a major economic activity in the Magdalen Islands, could the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans tell us what he intends to do in order to speedily rebut the propagandistic and defamatory messages being given by its opponents?

[English]

**Hon. Loyola Hearn (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is an extremely important question. I understand fully what he is talking about because the same thing applies to my own province, to several other provinces, and to several other countries.

For some reason Canada seems to be the one picked on, but Norway, Russia and other countries also have major seal hunts. Collectively, we are going to take on those who try to tell the world that it is wrong to kill seals. We must ensure that we have a balance in the ecosystem. If we do not keep the seal herds in control, our fish stocks will be destroyed and the herds themselves will self-destruct.

\* \* \*

● (1455)

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Ms. Tina Keeper (Churchill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a year ago today, aboriginal leaders, premiers and the previous Liberal government launched meetings that led to the Kelowna accord. It was a historic moment for Canada. During the election the Conservatives falsely promised that they would adopt the accord, but now they dismiss it completely.

Another Conservative promise made and then broken as they swiftly cancelled the \$5.1 billion. One year later there is no sign that they plan to deliver anything substantial to close the gap for aboriginal Canadians. They promised aboriginal Canadians that they would deliver. How can the Minister of Indian Affairs—

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.



*Oral Questions***FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I never did hear a question. It is not my fault that the Liberals seem like a bear with a sore head about this. They have only themselves to blame frankly with the F that they were given by the Assembly of First Nations on the report card.

They have 13 years of non-achievement, a swollen backlog of specific claims from 300 claims to 800, nothing on matrimonial real property, nothing on amending the Canadian Human Rights Act, nothing on national water standards, nothing on devolution, and nothing for Kashechewan or Pikangikum. There were just empty promises and a phony press release.

\* \* \*

**FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

**Mr. Fabian Manning (Avalon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, over the past weeks Canadians have been subjected to accusations and constant warnings that time is running out on the fish stocks, and that a UN resolution banning bottom trawling on the high seas was the only way to protect vulnerable ecosystems and that Canada was blocking it.

I was surprised at the criticism given Canada's strong stance in protecting vulnerable marine ecosystems at NAFO. Would the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans please tell the House, and all Canadians, how this has been resolved at the UN?

**Hon. Loyola Hearn (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we did not get caught up in the bottom trawling debate simply because when one is chasing elephants, one does not get sidetracked by rabbits. That was just one small paragraph in the major sustainable fisheries resolution where we had sides polarized on the bottom trawling issue.

With the leadership of Canada and our friends from Australia, in the wee hours of the morning, we arrived at a resolution where we have complete consensus from all the countries involved as it moves forward to the United Nations General Assembly.

\* \* \*

**AFGHANISTAN**

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on October 26 the defence minister told the House he would discuss Canada's role in Afghanistan any time any place. He then took his so-called cross-Canada tour to sell the Kandahar mission without setting foot in Atlantic Canada. Halifax is home to Canada's largest military community. Soldiers from Nova Scotia have suffered the most severe casualties in Kandahar.

I urge the minister to reconsider his refusal to come to Halifax on December 4 to participate in a public forum on Afghanistan, or does the minister's Canada end at the New Brunswick-Quebec border?

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I find it odd that a member who belongs to a party that really does not care about the military is talking about the military. I have been to Halifax twice since I have been in office and I will be in Halifax again in the near future, but I will follow my own schedule.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the primary role of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans is the protection of fish and fish habitat. In his own province there are two lakes near the Exploits River near Buchans in central Newfoundland which, through a legislative sleight of hand from DFO and the Minister of the Environment, have turned healthy productive fish lakes into tailing ponds for a mining company.

Why would the Department of Fisheries and Oceans allow healthy productive fish lakes to be turned into acid ponds for a mining company when its job is to protect the integrity of fish and fish habitat?

• (1500)

**Hon. Loyola Hearn (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member should know that the company involved went through an environmental assessment. It also developed a compensation program to offset any loss of fish or fish habitat. While we protect habitat, we must also support economic development. Unlike the NDP, if it were left up to that party, our natural resources would not be developed and we would still be catching fish in baskets. How would it ever pay for the social programs?

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**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Gary Merasty (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the tradition of aboriginal Canadians is to value the promises made to them. It is in that tradition that aboriginal Canadians will remember one simple thing that a promise was made and that promise was broken.

The minority Conservative government has betrayed aboriginal people. The Conservative government budget cancelled the \$5 billion agreement and replaced it with chump change, \$450 million over two years, about nine Conservative cents to every Liberal dollar that was promised. Not only that, the Conservatives cut funding to aboriginal languages, women, health and the list goes on.

Will the minister stand up to his bosses and demand that the fiscal update include Kelowna—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my friend speaks of promises and that is really all that aboriginal Canadians ever received from his government. The last Conservative budget involved \$3.7 billion of additional new expenditures for aboriginal Canadians, \$500 million for the Mackenzie socio-economic front, \$300 million for northern housing, \$300 million for off reserve housing, and \$2.2 billion for the residential school agreement. I could go on, but it would simply embarrass the party opposite.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, 10 years ago this week the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples released its report on the status of Canada's Indian, Inuit and Métis. Sadly, after more than a decade in power, the former Liberal government was given a failing grade by the Assembly of First Nations. In fact, it received eight Fs for failing to act on the educational recommendations in that report.

Can the minister tell us what Canada's new government is doing to improve opportunities for future aboriginal generations?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that Canada's Conservative government yesterday introduced Bill C-34, the very first first nations jurisdiction over education in British Columbia act. This is one of the most important pieces of legislation to be tabled in the House. It spells the future of our first nations and the future of their children.

It establishes a system that embraces the languages and the cultural heritage of first nations in Canada. This is the model on a go forward basis for first nations education in Canada. It will offer better results, stronger self-esteem, self-governance, and self-determination accomplishments.

This government is committed to—

\* \* \*

**PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of His Beatitude Patriarch Gregory III Laham, Patriarch of Antioch, the spiritual leader of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** It being Thursday, I believe the hon. member for Wascana has a question.

\* \* \*

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the government House leader could indicate his preferred schedule of House business for the balance of this week and moving into Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of next week.

In view of the fact that it appears we would not have a Thursday question opportunity next week, could he give some indication of his plans for the period when we return on December 4, particularly as he has indicated that there will be a discussion in the House in the first two weeks of December with respect to the issue of same sex marriage. I wonder if he has yet been able to designate a specific time.

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in answer to the hon. member's first question concerning my preferred schedule, my preferred schedule would be a schedule where all government business gets expedited and passed in the next three weeks and have the other place return the bills that we have already sent them. That is my preferred option.

In any case, if that is not possible or probable, we will continue today with the debate on the Bloc opposition motion and tomorrow we will begin on the government's motion in the name of the Prime Minister, followed by report stage of Bill C-24 and Bill S-5.

We will continue with the business from Friday next week, with the exception of Tuesday, November 28, which of course will be the final allotted day. We will be adjourned for Thursday and Friday of next week, Mr. Speaker, as you may already be aware.

I can indicate to the hon. member that we will be proceeding with the motion that he referred to and we will get to it before the Christmas break. I will be continuing my discussions with House leaders of all political parties as to some parameters and to get some common agreement on the conduct of that debate.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

• (1505)

[Translation]

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

OPPOSITION MOTION—THE QUEBEC NATION

The House resumed consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

**The Speaker:** Prior to oral question period, the hon. member for Papineau had the floor. Three minutes remain in the question and comment period after her speech.

Since there are no questions and comments, resuming debate, the hon. member for Lévis—Bellechasse.

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my Franco-Ontarian colleague, the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

We resume debate here today on a very important motion. It is understandable why I am so proud to show my support for the motion introduced by our Prime Minister. The motion recognizes that Quebecers form a nation within a united Canada.

[English]

Before I go any further, I would like to clarify one thing. I must refer to a French dictionary because sometimes between French and English there are some things that are difficult to distinguish.

There are two French definitions of nation. What we are talking about today regarding this motion is that a nation is a large human community, mostly living in the same place, sharing more or less strongly historic, linguistic, cultural and economic links. This is what we are talking about today.

[Translation]

Of course, with respect to Quebec society.

[English]

The other nation is the one we recognize as a sovereign nation, which is Canada. Canada is a true nation in terms of a sovereign country. It is important to clarify that.

*Business of Supply*

I would like to share something else with my fellow colleague. As a Québécois, when I feel respected as a Quebecker I feel even more Canadian. This is at the core, I would say, of the last 30 years of the sovereignist movement.

[*Translation*]

The aim of today's motion is deeply rooted. Indeed, over the past 30 years, the sovereignist movement has grown out of disrespect for the very spirit of the Canadian federation and disrespect for Quebec's specificity. It is important to understand this. As long as we, as Quebeckers, feel respected within the Canadian federation, we will no longer necessarily feel the desire to leave.

It is not surprising that the Conservative Party is here today to properly represent and recognize Quebec's specificity. Why not? Because the Conservative Party fundamentally respects the federation, the spirit of Confederation. In other words, it recognizes that certain powers belong to the federal government and others belong to the provinces.

Often, if we really get to the bottom of things and ask sovereignists what they really want, they say they want to respect the spirit of the Canadian federation so as to ensure that the rights and privileges that belong to the provinces are respected. This includes education and various jurisdictions that are particularly vital to the protection of language.

I would also like to state that this exercise will help us to define ourselves as a Canadian nation as well. One of the fundamental characteristics of Canadian society is the distinct nature of Quebec. It is what differentiates us from Americans and other countries, for example. And it makes it possible to have a country where we can express ourselves in two languages. As a Quebecker who is also a Canadian, I am blessed by the fact that this distinct nature is recognized in the other provinces. Bilingualism is a good example of that.

Today, the motion tabled is based on a fact that I would like to highlight: Quebec's distinct nature is at the heart of the Canadian federation, and that is nothing new. It is nonetheless an important motion.

I would like to refer to the editorial in today's edition of *La Presse*, where Mr. Pratte writes that "the motion tabled yesterday by the Prime Minister...represents historic progress".

Today, our Prime Minister is reaching out to all parties, including the Bloc Québécois, to obtain their support for this motion. If it is adopted, the Canadian Parliament will be giving unprecedented acknowledgement of the distinct nature of Quebec.

Today, a Conservative government has further shaped the Canadian identity by recognizing the distinct nature of Quebec.

Mr. Pratte continues:

This step forward is not an isolated step in a long series of failures, as the sovereignist version of our history portrays it. On the contrary, it is another step in an evolution that is very favourable to Quebeckers, despite a significant number of backwards steps and a great deal of frustration.

Thus, the relationship of the founding peoples is evolving and Quebeckers are finding enough space to develop and to achieve their prosperity.

● (1510)

Why do we have a federation here, in Canada? It is precisely to take into consideration Quebec's specificity. When we opted for that political system, back in 1867, we did not choose a unitary system. We opted for a confederal system, in which the provinces are responsible for certain jurisdictions. So, this respect for Quebec's specificity is at the core of the Canadian system.

Moreover, as we know, in Quebec we have notaries, and we use the civil law, which is based on the famous Napoleonic code. We also have school boards, and Quebec justices who sit on the Supreme Court. So, there are many examples which illustrate that Quebec is recognized and that it has its own place within the Canadian federation. This vision is fundamentally different from that of opposition colleagues, particularly Bloc Québécois members.

The Conservatives are proposing that the Quebec nation, that Quebeckers fully recognize themselves within the Canadian federation. We do not want the narrow vision of a self-centred nationalism but, rather, a federalism that is open, for example, to other francophone minorities across Canada.

I am taking this opportunity to salute the Quebec government for its initiative, for reaching out to the other francophone minorities and trying to provide support as well as a framework to these primary safeguards of the French language.

The real question today is: Does the presence of a sovereign party in this House help Quebec, does it ensure that Quebec becomes a more prosperous society? That is the real question behind today's motion. And we should ask ourselves that question.

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The hon. member for Terrebonne—Blainville is rising on a point of order.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** Mr. Speaker, I feel that the hon. member opposite is ignoring the real question, the real debate. He has just completely changed the subject and I ask you to call him to order, please.

**The Speaker:** I realize that the hon. member wishes to discuss the motion before the House, and I have heard nothing out of order up to this point. He has certainly asked another question, to which he clearly wishes to respond himself. The question may be relevant to the motion before the House. I don't know.

We shall hear the hon. member. He must have the opportunity to conclude his remarks.

● (1515)

**Mr. Steven Blaney:** Mr. Speaker, I hope that you stopped your stopwatch for these few moments of interruption.

What I am basically saying is that the motion before us today is in fact intended to recognize that Quebeckers form a nation within Canada. That is basically what I am saying.

I am also saying that, as a result of my presence within this government to defend this proposal, solutions can be put forward for the advancement of this recognition.

*Business of Supply*

Consider, for example, the fact that we are committed to restoring the fiscal balance, or that we are committed to introducing effective means of combating climate change. I hope that we will have the support of my colleagues in the Bloc so that Quebec and Quebecers can have a healthier environment.

I would also like to state—and it is important for me to do so—that every time Quebec has had sovereignist parties, it has experienced setbacks. The Quebec nation, if we can call it that, has undergone setbacks when it has had sovereignist parties. We just gave the example of the environment. What has happened over the last 13 years with sovereignist representatives of Quebec here in this chamber? There have been major setbacks. An explosion of greenhouse gas emissions.

I am proud to be a Quebecer and a Canadian. It is important to say in this House that one can be a Quebecer and a Canadian at the same time, and be both in the fullest sense. I think that this is a matter of mutual respect for our differences.

Quebec has a leading role to play within the Canadian federation. It is present and active. And like all Canadians, I think that we want to work to strengthen our federation while respecting the distinctiveness of each of the regions of the country, collaborating with our partners, and restoring the fiscal balance.

More than ever, I want to continue to help ensure that the collectivity of Quebec thrives within the government, and I will be happy to respond to questions from my colleagues in the House.

**Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, first off, the member for Lévis—Bellechasse provided us with a definition he found in a dictionary, and I would like to point out to him the fact that his research was not very thorough, because I do not believe he is intellectually dishonest. He used only one definition that relates to a country. He did not use the definition that relates to people. I too can bring dictionaries into this House. I refer to the definition of the word “nation” in the *Le Petit Larousse* as it concerns people:

Large community of people, typically living within the same territory and having, to a certain extent, a shared history, language, culture and economy—

I would ask my colleague, the member for Lévis—Bellechasse, a Quebecer, why he left out this very important element?

**Mr. Steven Blaney:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see that we refer to the same dictionary, because we have the same *Le Petit Larousse*. It is important to have the same references. We are talking about the same nation. I hope you will recognize the motion. Indeed, according to Mr. Pratte:

If they vote not to recognize Quebecers as a nation within Canada, they will demonstrate that they are serving their own purposes rather than those of their electors. They will be betraying the interests of Quebecers.

I invite my colleague to support the motion. We have an opportunity here in this House to unanimously recognize the fact that Quebecers form a society within the country. I invite him to support the motion. It does not commit him to whatever follows. We would have thus unanimous support. All Quebecers in this House will have the opportunity to support this motion.

I cordially invite him to do so.

**Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his comments. I am an Acadian. My Acadian friends live in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, the Magdalen Islands, Louisiana, Maine, Montreal and across Canada. They are members of this people. We really do not define ourselves geographically, even though people think most Acadians live in the Maritimes.

I have friends who are Quebecers, and Quebecers form a people. They share a common language, culture and history. A number of them live where I do, in Baie Sainte-Marie. They are just as much Quebecers as the people who live in the Lac-St-Jean region or other regions. They are members of the same people.

If this people is to be defined by the word “nation”, it seems to me that it would be ridiculous to limit that to a particular geographic location, when there are Quebecers pretty well everywhere in Canada. It could be said that the people of Quebec form a nation within Canada. That way all Quebecers would be included. Would it not be silly to consider a Quebecer less of a Quebecer than others and less of a member of the nation if he moves around within the country?

• (1520)

**Mr. Steven Blaney:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank my colleague for his comments. The Acadians have provided great lessons of solidarity and have behaved like a great people in the past, in order to preserve their rights and their language. In Quebec, unfortunately, we sometimes tend to be a bit inward-looking. We have forgotten that some francophone groups needed our support to continue setting themselves free.

This is also something that is involved in this motion. When we talk about open federalism, we are thinking of minorities, regardless of whether they are anglophone or francophone, as long as they can support one another. We have to broaden our horizons. This is also what we are talking about when we discuss nationalism or open federalism. This is fundamental to today’s debate, and this is the reason why I invite my colleague to support this motion. Who knows whether later on there may be other motions that we can consider for other communities since these definitions will certainly apply to others.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of taking part in the debate on the motion tabled by the leader of the Bloc Québécois, which reads as follows:

That this House recognize that Quebecers form a nation.

I do not have any difficulty in recognizing that Quebecers constitute a nation within a united Canada. Where my speech will no doubt depart from those of the Bloc Québécois members is that I am certain that this same nation can develop and flourish within a united country called Canada. The proof is in our history.

*Business of Supply*

It is impossible not to be struck by the major transformations experienced by Quebec in recent years, since that critical period that the historians quickly named the Quiet Revolution. It was with the team of Premier Jean Lesage that the Quebec of the early 1960s opened up to the realities of the contemporary world, making up in the space of a few years for a delay it had suffered in a large number of areas of activity, compared to other states and governments, which had already met the challenge of modernity. Quebec managed to achieve, in the space of a few decades—notably as far as the creation of development tools is concerned—what some countries and nations spent generations doing.

Today, Quebec is a modern state that, in the words of former premier Bernard Landry, would be the envy of the world. Indeed, Mr. Landry wrote in the newspaper *La Presse*, on October 27:

Our nation-state, even without full sovereignty, is even more powerful in some respects than many nation-states that are formally sovereign. Our state already possesses important legal and financial means to support crucial actions for our society in the fields of culture, education, social solidarity, the economy, the environment, justice, international relations and many others.

I have the feeling that this quotation will no doubt be used during this debate, and for an excellent reason. In seeking to demonstrate the merits of the sovereigntist theory, Mr. Landry has proved that Quebec possesses the tools necessary for its development and its growth while operating within the Canadian federation.

In other words, Quebec, a modern society open to other peoples and proud to welcome them into its territory, profits from the benefits that result from its integration into the Canadian federation. At the individual level, Quebecers, while forming a nation, enjoy the benefits that flow from possession of a double identity.

This state of affairs results from the flexibility of our federation, which recognizes the distinct character of Quebec. For example, education which is of critical importance for Quebec is an area of exclusive provincial jurisdiction. The Quebec civil code, which is different from the common law that prevails in the other provinces, is protected by sections 94 and 98 of the Constitution. The use of French, as well as English, is guaranteed in our Parliament as well as in the courts of Canada. While the Parliament of Canada can establish retirement pensions and supplementary benefits, this power is subject to provincial primacy, as a result of which the provinces are predominant, and which represents the constitutional basis for the Quebec Pension Plan and protects it.

In addition, other subjects related to the distinct character of Quebec fall exclusively within provincial jurisdiction, in particular, civil rights and property; the administration of justice and municipal institutions.

The constitutional protection that Quebec enjoys in terms of its identity extends to many other sectors, especially those relating to language, which are enshrined in the Constitution Act, 1982. Let us remember, however, that this uniqueness of Quebec is reinforced by the practice of a federalism that takes into account respect for other levels of jurisdiction and places an emphasis on intergovernmental cooperation.

•(1525)

These are objectives that our government intends to continue pursuing in the future.

There is no denying the prominent role that Quebec has played in building Canada and no one would even try in all good faith; it is equally true, though, that Quebecers like all Canadians, have benefited from the advantages of being Canadian: a quality of life among the highest in the world and constitutional guarantees of respect for human rights.

Quebeckers have demonstrated after 139 years within the Canadian federation that the legislative and institutional tools at their disposal have enabled their language and culture to flourish and will continue to do so. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms secures the cultural future of Quebecers by guaranteeing the linguistic rights of francophones at the federal level. The charter also guarantees that French and English are the two official languages of Canada and that they can be used in Parliament, before the courts, and in federal organizations. Furthermore, the right of francophones to an education in their own language is guaranteed everywhere in Canada, as is the right of anglophones in Quebec.

Quebeckers form a nation, but it must be specified that this nation is within a united country called Canada. Quebec's distinctiveness is recognized and respected within the Canadian federation, and Quebecers can be themselves within a country that they have helped build, from generation to generation, side by side with their fellow citizens in the rest of Canada.

In the open letter that he sent to our Prime Minister last October 27, the former Premier of Quebec, Bernard Landry, concluded by saying:

You must know in all honesty that you will then be confronted with the following question: why should the Quebec nation content itself with the status of a province in another nation and renounce its equality with your nation and all the others? That is still and forever a question of truth and elementary logic.

Truth and logic are on the side of history, and history reminds us of this reality: Quebecers form a nation within a united country called Canada.

•(1530)

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to see how aware the member is of what is going on in Quebec. Not only is he aware, but he has a special fondness for Quebec, of which he knows all the institutions by heart. He will be a choice candidate when we achieve our independence. He can apply for immigration and we will pay special attention to his application.

I would like to ask the member if he understands the fact that in the motion proposed by his party, Quebec is being boxed into a reality. The motion we are proposing does not say anything else but that we are Quebecers and that Quebec is a nation, without any condition. The rest is all hypothetical. Right now, what the members opposite are trying to make us say is not at all what is in the motion. I want to know if the member fully understands that.

[*English*]

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Mr. Speaker, what I do understand is that the Bloc Québécois refuses to acknowledge the truth. The truth is that Canada is a federation that works. It works because of our heritage, the heritage of a decentralized country, the heritage of a federation that recognizes the realities and specificities of our provincial and federal partners.

*Business of Supply*

What we are saying to Quebec is that we want Quebec to have vitality as a province, but within Canada. We recognize the Québécois as a nation, but within a united Canada. We are offering them open federalism.

[Translation]

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to make a few brief comments on the motion put forward by the Bloc before asking a question.

[English]

For the vast majority of my life I have lived in Nova Scotia. I grew up with a great appreciation of the Acadian presence in Nova Scotia and in Atlantic Canada. I considered Quebec to be a very dynamic, creative and exciting province outside of Atlantic Canada about which I did not know a great deal.

I then had the privilege of being elected leader of the New Democratic Party and coming to Ottawa in 1995. Over the last 10 years, I have developed an enormous appreciation of how very special and, in some ways, unique, the province of Quebec is within the Canadian family.

In order to fully appreciate that I think one must live, however briefly, in the province of Quebec and not just in the wonderful cities of Quebec and Montreal, but in the northern part of the province. I had the opportunity to live in the Lac-Saint-Jean area and Jonquière over a period of years taking brief French immersion courses.

When the member speaks about his support for a strong Quebec within a united Canada, which his government has expressed in the motion introduced yesterday, I wonder if he would comment on whether he sees ways in which the Canadian government could enhance the relationship between Canada and the people of Quebec through changes—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** The hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Mr. Speaker, the member's question follows up on a theme about being Québécois and being proud to be Québécois, proud of our culture and of our contributions to Canada and wanting to remain in Canada.

My grandfather, also Pierre Lemieux, was born in Quebec City. My father was born in Quebec City. My father's family lives in the province of Quebec. We are not only proud of our culture and of our heritage, but we are proud Canadians as well. What this government is offering to Quebecers is that they can be proud of their culture and their contributions, but they can be proud Canadians as well.

Quebeckers realize this. Quebeckers have fully participated in the founding of Canada. They have supported Canada, knowing full well that their unique heritage would be respected by this country. The vast majority of Quebeckers are rightly proud of their Quebec identity.

• (1535)

[Translation]

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert.

I am very proud and pleased to rise today to speak to the Bloc Québécois motion asking that the House recognize that Quebecers form a nation, to which we have been adding “within Canada” since this morning.

I feel like speaking from the heart about all that I have heard since this morning. I listened closely to the speeches by federalists as well as to those by my colleagues and, frankly and honestly, I have to say that I am stunned by the questions and discussions I have been hearing in this House on this matter. I have also been receiving since this morning calls from constituents, people who have made the democratic choice to elect Claude DeBellefeuille as the MP for Beauharnois—Salaberry. These people have elected a Bloc Québécois member, as have voters in 51 out of 75 ridings in Quebec. Even the member for Lévis—Bellechasse cannot ignore the fact that, once again, a majority of Quebecers have massively and overwhelmingly voted for the Bloc.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:** I will carry on, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, after this motion was announced, the Prime Minister rose in this House and said he would not recognize the existence of a Quebec nation without qualification, that it had to be within a united Canada. As a federalist government still suffering from the Canadian mental block, the Conservative government felt compelled to diminish the import of this rather simple recognition, to the point of rendering it meaningless. The motion by the Conservative Party was different from the one put forward today by the Bloc Québécois. This is proof.

Why does the Prime Minister not support the Bloc Québécois motion? I received a call from a constituent this morning, asking why the Prime Minister was suddenly recognizing Quebec as a nation at this time of year, but did not do so when he was in Quebec City on June 24, which is Quebec's national holiday. Why today? One has to wonder. I have been asked the question. Is the Prime Minister forced to make a commitment because, today, the Bloc Québécois is again stirring discussions and debate in the House on such a simple issue?

Why is the Conservative minority government continuing to oppose the amended motion? I would say that the Conservative Party's motion is a trick. That motion is conditional, with no effect or consequence. It is significant that the Prime Minister did not provide us with any information yesterday about how his government plans to interpret this concept of “a nation within a united Canada”.

What is he promising with this motion? What does it mean? What will it mean in fact? Let us not forget an important statement the Prime Minister made yesterday:

Do the Québécois form a nation independent of Canada? The answer is no, and it will always be no.

The Prime Minister also said that yesterday.

The motion proposed by the Bloc Québécois today is straightforward, clear and simple. The Conservative Party's objectives are much less so. The government is trying to pre-empt the Bloc Québécois. Why? Because it is no different from all the other federalist governments that came before it. Conservative or Liberal, it makes no difference. They have a barely controlled terror of unconditionally recognizing Quebec as a nation. To their way of thinking, that would give ammunition to the sovereignists and would further their plan for sovereignty. The question is simple. Do Quebecers form a nation?

The Conservative government opposes the Bloc Québécois motion because it asks for real, unequivocal, unconditional recognition of the existence of the nation of Quebec. Everyone, starting with the Conservatives themselves, has begun to dilute this motion.

● (1540)

We are talking about a party that held its caucus meeting in Quebec City on the eve of Quebecers' national holiday, but could not even say the word "nation" in a sentence. The national holiday was not that long ago. It was in June, and now it is November.

Meanwhile, the Liberals are in turmoil in the midst of a leadership race where only one candidate has come out in favour of recognizing Quebecers as a nation. If the Conservative government is as sincere as it would have us believe, it should accept the amended motion introduced by the Bloc Québécois, because this debate raises another interesting question: would the Prime Minister really talk about a nation if he had to entrench it in the Constitution? We wonder.

Next week, the Conservative Party will very likely vote against the Bloc motion on the grounds that it has already recognized Quebec as a nation. But Quebecers are not fools, Prime Minister. They know a trick when they see one.

**An hon. member:** Mr. Speaker!

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:** Mr. Speaker, I will speak to you, as my colleague points out.

By having constantly cheated Quebec on a constitutional level, the federalists are running out of arguments against Quebec's demands and the consensus in Quebec. They have to come up with all sorts of excuses to argue against us. They created a motion similar to the Bloc's, but nuanced, weaker, watered down and they are opposing our motion by saying already that they will vote for the other motion.

This is the problem as I see it. The successive federalist governments do not understand, and it is precisely with this closed attitude, with these types of restrictions and tricks that they alienate thousands of Quebecers.

Lord Durham said in 1838, "I expected to find a conflict between a government and a people, but instead found two nations at war within the same state."

Since that day when the Quebec nation was already recognized, the federal political plan, which is going on right now, was put in place to slow down, prevent, hold back the emergence and recognition of a people or a nation. The successive federalist governments boast about being open, flexible and an example of a

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federalism that works. The truth is that every gain within Canadian federalism, every bit of progress made by Quebec throughout its history has been hard won through recurring battles and always met with fierce resistance by the various federalist governments.

Conservative or Liberal, it is always the same thing: they all unite against Quebec. And every one of Quebec's victories, constitutionally speaking, has been nothing more than pure and simple catch up since the patriation of the Constitution in 1982.

If today's debate is no exception, what the Bloc Québécois motion is asking is simply that Quebec be recognized as a nation. We are in full debate because the government had to add a nuance, amend the motion and impose its conditions.

Do I have any time left, Mr. Speaker, since I am sharing my time with the hon. member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert? You are indicating that I have a minute left.

I will close by saying that any hope that the federalists will propose something substantial in Quebec is non-existent. The disagreement on Quebec's place that has gone on since 1867 still exists. That said, the Quebec nation continues to exist even without Canada's recognition. It continues to pay its taxes and to have its own interests that sometimes differ from Canada's interests.

The Bloc Québécois continues to defend the interests of the Quebec nation.

● (1545)

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech made by my colleague. She mentioned that certain people had deceived Quebec. Could she tell us who she is talking about? Is she talking about those who have been in Quebec City for 13 years and have not been able to restore fiscal balance? Or is she talking about those who set Quebec back on several occasions, like in 1982 with the patriation of the Constitution, at a time when the province was governed by sovereignists? Therefore, are sovereignists not setting Quebec back within the Canadian federation?

Has the presence of the Bloc Québécois in Ottawa helped Quebecers, who form a nation, move forward? If not, what conclusions can be drawn from that?

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very relevant question.

In my opinion, the significant presence of Bloc Québécois members in Ottawa is a testament to the fact that it does a good job representing the interests of Quebecers. They feel that they are well represented since they elected 51 members of our party in the last election. It certainly means something to feel that a large number of Quebecers want to be represented by members of the Bloc Québécois who defend the interests of Quebec in Ottawa.

Let us look at certain issues like the manpower issue and all the efforts we put into it. And there are bills that we introduced, such as the anti-scab bill and the amendment to the Employment Insurance Act. All these measures are dear to Quebecers and reflect their values. That is my answer.

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**Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should admit that her party is using the valuable time of this House—where we should be debating current issues that are relevant and very important to all Canadians from all provinces—to engage in petty partisan politics.

A motion was presented to recognize Quebec as a nation, and now the Bloc wants to add “currently” within Canada. Like the hon. member, I too was elected to the Parliament of Canada to represent the interests of my region and my riding, to make laws, to present motions and to debate issues for Canada, as it exists. We cannot imagine a different Canada.

I visited almost every region in Quebec. About fifteen years ago, I dealt with a family from Sainte-Marie-de-Beauce, the Bonnevilles. These people were very proud of their riding and their region. They told me about the Beauce. They did not talk about the Beauce being currently within Québec.

Are the hon. member and the Bloc Québécois suggesting that we use this wording for first nations, that are currently within Canada, in case they decide some day that they want something else? Quebecers form a nation within Canada. They are no less Québécois and no less members of that nation whether they live in Sainte-Marie or in Montreal.

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's question.

We have to be careful when extrapolating statements or speeches. There is something I want to tell the hon. member.

Quebeckers know they are part of a nation, but right now they do not feel adequately represented under the federal parliamentary system, in Ottawa. They are asking us to claim the right to manage what is ours, and to do so based on our values. Quebecers are asking us to be strong advocates for their cause, here in Ottawa.

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased today to talk about the Quebec nation and, specifically, the text of the Bloc Québécois motion, which reads as follows:

That this House recognize that Quebecers form a nation currently within Canada.

I would like to begin by thanking my colleague from Beauharnois—Salaberry for her excellent and most interesting analysis of the national situation in Quebec.

I would like to quote some lines from the 1970 Quebec cult classic, *Elvis Gratton*. Here is the context: Bob, the main character, who is also Elvis Gratton, is a federalist.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Ms. Carole Lavallée:** People are already laughing because they know the joke. The film is a joke. Nevertheless, I would like to quote the lines where he is trying to explain his identity to a traveller. This is what he says:

I am...a French North American, a Quebec-Canadian francophone, a French-Canadian-speaking French Quebecker... We are Canadian, American, North American francophones, Franco-Quebeckers... We are Franco-Canadians from Quebec, Quebec-Canadians.

The film is a joke. It is a very funny social satire. It is also a harsh criticism of Canadian federalism. It uses many types of humour: irony, puns, black humour and parody. It also uses jokes. This scene, in the context of this satire, is a joke. It made us Quebeckers laugh a lot. I can see that it is still making federalists in this House laugh.

I must say that this Pierre Falardeau film, which has become a cult classic as I said earlier, has made generations of us laugh. But there comes a time when we must stop laughing and turn our attention to serious matters.

Yesterday's Conservative government motion is a lot like that joke. “Quebec nation in a united Canada” is also a lot like that Yvon Deschamps joke that gets told and retold: “An independent Quebec in a strong and united Canada”.

This film pointed out that Quebecers' conception of their nation has changed over the years. After the conquest, Quebecers called themselves Canadians, in opposition to the people whom they called the English. Then they called themselves French Canadians in order to differentiate themselves from the English who had decided in the meantime to call themselves Canadians. All that time, as a minority within Canada, they continued to define themselves in relation to their origin. French Canadians were the descendants of the original French colonists. A person was born French Canadian but could hardly become one. It was at the time of the Quiet Revolution that all this changed.

Taking their destiny into their own hands and with the help of the Quebec state, Quebecers gradually stopped defining themselves by their origin and started defining themselves by their sense of belonging to Quebec society. Quebecers see themselves less and less as a minority within Canada and increasingly as a separate nation with its own territory called Quebec and a national government called the Government of Quebec.

While the francophone population is increasingly mixed as a result of the integration of immigrant children into its schools, the term “French Canadian” does not mean very much to young people any more.

Anyone who joins us on this beautiful adventure to build a French-speaking society in North America, making a strength of its differences, is as much a Quebecker as the descendants of the 17th-century French colonists. The hon. members for Papineau, Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine and Saint-Lambert are Quebeckers, but they are not French Canadians.

There are still some Quebeckers who take an ethnic view of their nation. Marking Quebec's fête nationale last June 22, the Conservative member for Louis-Hébert spoke in the House about:

— St. Jean Baptiste Day, a day to celebrate the cultural pride and rich heritage of francophones in every region of Canada.

This is not the view that the Bloc Québécois takes of the Quebec nation and its fête nationale, nor is it the view of most Quebeckers.



Recognition as a nation is more than symbolic. Some people think that recognizing a nation is a symbolic gesture of little consequence. That was the view expressed by the Minister of International Cooperation and Minister for La Francophonie and Official Languages, who dared to say last June 23 that “people are not interested really in that question”. When asked whether Quebec City is a national capital, she said that is what the signs along the highways say.

• (1550)

Contrary to what she believes, recognizing a nation is more than just a symbolic act. Nations have rights, and one right in particular, which is self-determination. In other words, the right to direct their own development.

Two former premiers of Quebec, René Lévesque—a sovereignist—and Robert Bourassa—a federalist—agreed on this issue.

On June 9, 1980, René Lévesque said:

Quebec society has all the characteristics of a distinct national community, [and] has an inalienable right to self-determination. It is the most fundamental right the people of Quebec possess.

As for Robert Bourassa, on June 22, 1990, in a speech given to the Quebec National Assembly following the failed Meech Lake agreement, he said:

English Canada must clearly understand that no matter what anyone says or does, Quebec is and always will be a distinct society that is free and able to control its own destiny and its own development.

And those were the words of a federalist.

A people's right to self-determination has been clearly defined and set out by the United Nations. Resolution 2625 (XXV) adopted by the General Assembly in 1970 defines it best:

... all peoples have the right freely to determine, without external interference, their political status and to pursue their economic, social and cultural development, ... the free association or integration with an independent State or the emergence into any other political status freely determined by a people constitute modes of implementing the right of self determination by that people.

The Bloc Québécois does not want this recognition to be mere lip service. It is asking Canada to deal with Quebec for what it is. Established after the failure of the Meech Lake accord, the Bloc Québécois has learned from Quebec's repeated setbacks. We are not working on the renewal of federalism. It is up to the federalists to prove that they recognize that Quebec forms a nation and that they intend to take steps that will make this acknowledgement meaningful.

At present, the possibility of Quebec's self-determination within Canada, unfortunately, is not yet on the table. Sovereignty is currently the only means of achieving self-determination.

There is no hope that federalism will provide a sound option for Quebec. Disagreement about Quebec's place existed in 1867 and continues to exist.

The latest Environics poll indicates that 66% of Quebecers feel that the Constitution must be amended to recognize the Quebec nation, whereas 83% of Canadians are against it. It is hard to see how Quebec and Canada will resolve that difference.

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That being said, the Quebec nation continues to exist even without being recognized by Canada. It continues to pay its taxes, it continues to have interests of its own that are sometimes different than those of Canada. The Bloc continues to defend the interests of the Quebec nation.

Because there is a Quebec nation, there is a Quebec culture and a Quebec film industry. I will quote the representatives of the Union des Artistes du Québec, who were answering questions about the Interim Report on the Canadian Feature Film Industry on September 15, 2005:

We feel that there is a Canadian film industry and a Quebec film industry, no matter the language in which the films are created. First, this reality must be acknowledged and then the specific characteristics of each must be taken into account in order to define them and to find appropriate solutions.

For the Bloc Québécois, there is not a francophone market and an anglophone market in Canada. There is a Quebec film industry and a Canadian film industry.

Throughout the work of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage on the 2005 feature film policy, the Bloc Québécois tried to make the committee members aware of this idea, something that is obvious to anyone who knows anything about films in Canada and Quebec. The challenges these two markets face are so different that it is impossible to have a single feature film policy. The National Film Board of Canada noted in its own position paper:

—as of September 2004, Quebec films generated 21.1% of revenues in the French-language market, while Canadian films generated a mere 1.7% in the English-language market.

However, for reasons beyond our comprehension, the committee chose to ignore and to silence any reference to the Quebec film industry, which is defined as part of the French-language market.

• (1555)

Films such as *Mambo Italiano*, *The Blue Butterfly* or *Bon cop*, *Bad Cop* do not fall within the English-language market, but within the Quebec market. Recognizing Quebec films would require the federal government to recognize the specificity of the Quebec culture, which it refuses to do.

There has been a misunderstanding between Quebec and Canada since 1867. Since Quebecers were forming a nation and their first allegiance was to Quebec, and thinking they would finally have the right to direct their own development themselves, they accepted the Constitution of 1867. Canada did not formally recognize that Quebec formed a nation.

I do not think I will have enough time to finish, but my colleagues will quite certainly pick up the arguments on the misunderstanding between Quebec and Canada that has lasted since 1867. If they ask me why, I will be pleased to respond.

• (1600)

[English]

**Mr. Peter Van Loan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this country has been a tremendous success. It is the project that was the vision of the bringing together of English and French, the vision of Sir John A. Macdonald and George-Étienne Cartier and those who worked with them as Fathers of Confederation, who saw the possibilities and the potential of a united Canada that included those founding cultures.

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There were some at the time who opposed it, including some from Quebec. In fact, a fellow named Sir Wilfrid Laurier was one of the fiercest opponents of Confederation, yet he too, over time, came to see the benefits and the opportunities that this country presented to his culture, to his home and to the Québécois.

We have seen what has happened since within a united Canada. We have had an épanouissement of the culture of Quebec, something that could never have happened had Quebec been alone in North America, when the Québécois culture might have been reduced to something little more than the Cajun culture in terms of the French Canadian tradition. It is the fact of the Canada of Quebec, a Quebec in Canada, and the Québécois being in Canada that has allowed the protection of that culture, the blossoming of it, as I have said, and the opportunities to build the greatest country.

Does the member opposite really believe that the cultural opportunities and the strengthening of Québécois culture that have occurred would have been possible had that people been subject to the ebbs and flows of North American culture and the strength of American culture? Or would they have been reduced to little more than what we see among the Cajuns today?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée:** Mr. Speaker, Quebecers form a people, Quebecers form a nation. We have our territory which is quite distinct, we have our history, we have our institutions, we have our language. Any people and any nation wishing to thrive does so despite everyone else and despite any motion.

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have listened to my colleague's speech in which she managed to conjure up both Elvis Gratton and Robert Bourassa in the same breath. I will remind her that Robert Bourassa is before all else a great Quebecer and he was also a great federalist leader during a particularly troubled period in Quebec. He was also a champion of sustainable development, and that is why Quebec now has a very positive environmental report card in that respect and can in fact be a model for the rest of the Canadian federation.

In her speech, my colleague talked a lot about what divides Quebecers and Canada. My question is about something that unites them, about a fundamental issue, climate change. How can my colleague, who represents Quebecers, not support the Clean Air Act, which is precisely meant to protect the interests of Quebec and combat climate change?

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée:** Mr. Speaker, I get the impression that I am listening to the scene from Pierre Falardeau's film all over again.

Because he has asked me a question about climate change, which fits very well with the motion we are debating today, I will answer him by talking about the point of discord that has existed between Quebec and Canada since 1867.

In point of fact, as I started to say earlier, because Quebecers formed a nation and their first allegiance was to Quebec, they agreed to the 1867 Constitution thinking that they were finally getting the right to determine their own development.

But Canada had never formally recognized that Quebec formed a nation. The Supreme Court ruled on this subject in 1981. On April

17, 2002, the National Assembly unanimously adopted the following motion:

That the National Assembly reaffirm that it has never adhered to the Constitution Act, 1982, the effect of which has been to diminish the powers and rights of Quebec without the consent of the Government of Quebec and the National Assembly, and that it continues to be unacceptable to Quebec.

• (1605)

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to pursue the question from the member for Lévis—Bellechasse concerning climate change, among other things.

This is a perfect illustration of the federal government's lack of comprehension of the Quebec nation. Over and over, in the National Assembly of Quebec, its members have passed unanimous motions calling on the federal government to recognize the right of Quebec to implement the Kyoto protocol. But we have a federal government that stubbornly refuses to recognize this national consensus in Quebec.

I therefore ask my colleague, is this not another example that illustrates that we are dealing here, not with asymmetrical federalism, but on the contrary, with a federal government that is refusing to recognize another national consensus that demonstrates the existence of the Quebec nation?

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie is perfectly correct. The environment issue is a good illustration of the fact that Quebec is a nation where a consensus exists concerning the welfare of Quebecers. The way in which the Minister of the Environment treated Quebec on the international stage in Nairobi is another example of the fact that Quebec is a nation and would have the full status that it needs on the international level if it were sovereign.

**Hon. Jean Lapierre (Outremont, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to take part in this debate today, which need I say, is a debate that was born of a strategy, of a tactic on the part of the Bloc Québécois that does not seek to have the Quebecois nation recognized by the whole House of Commons. The Bloc Québécois thought by tabling this motion to divide the members of this House, the federalist parties, and, finally, to be able to say to Quebecers once again how humiliated they were because the House of Commons refused to recognize the Quebecois nation.

Well, their firecracker has exploded in their faces; right in their faces. Thanks to their motion, they have united all the federalist forces in this House for the first time in a very long while. In that sense, that tactic of division—I would go so far as to say that treacherous tactic—enabled us yesterday to witness a great moment in this House.

I never thought that I would stand up to applaud the Prime Minister during this session! I never thought that I would delight in the presence of the leader of the New Democratic Party! The one person to whom I was ready to give a standing ovation was the leader of the Liberal Party. However, yesterday, because of the Bloc's strategy of division; because the Bloc wanted to weaken Quebec and then have it humiliated, it went completely off track. As a result, we see now that they are skating on the edges of their skates, over on their ankles. They are proposing an amendment about a united Canada. They no longer know where they are going because their strategy failed miserably.

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At the same time, this provocation gave each of us the opportunity to reflect, in our own hearts and consciences. In that sense, what happened yesterday, because of the motion by the Prime Minister, will enable us all to speak out, as Quebeckers and Canadians, with one common voice. It is the worst possible message that the Bloc members could hear.

They were convinced that the Prime Minister would say no to the Quebec nation. They were convinced that this party would be divided and that their motion would be rejected. Then, they would have travelled to Montreal, Quebec City and the regions to say how terrible this was. It is absolutely unbelievable to see that the Bloc, which claims it does not need to search for its identity, tabled a tactical motion to try to get recognized and to seek its Quebec identity here, while being convinced all along that it would not happen. However, it is precisely this provocation that led, yesterday, to a great moment of national unity, and I must pay tribute to that party for achieving that.

The Bloc Québécois' action resulted in some of my colleagues, who had reservations about this whole thing, to agree on a recognition. A vote will take place within the next few days to recognize that Quebeckers form a nation within a united Canada. It is a very positive thing to see this change in views and mentalities.

I know that Quebeckers are pleased to see that this House recognizes their difference. This quest for recognition goes back many years. I remember that, during my career, at the 1980 referendum, Quebeckers were told that if they voted no, they would get a form of recognition and federalism would be renewed. I was also there when the Constitution was patriated, in 1982. That patriation was an unfinished business.

Obviously, the quest for the recognition of the Quebec difference was central to all these representations. This has been the case for a very long time. In that sense, the motion tabled by the Prime Minister is in itself a historic measure that will allow us to hold out the olive branch to Quebeckers, particularly federalist Quebeckers, and tell them that we recognize their existence and their difference within the great Canadian family.

• (1610)

At the same time, this means we recognize that we have more than one identity. We can be both proud Quebeckers and proud Canadians. We can be shaped by both of these identities. Together, all of our identities create the Canadian mosaic. By recognizing the Quebec nation, we are telling Quebeckers that they are more than just a part of our multicultural society and we are recognizing a historical reality. In that sense, I think this would make many of our fellow citizens feel better about being part of this country and feel accepted just as they are. Period, as the leader of the Bloc Québécois would say.

We are what we are. I think the Bloc Québécois' tactics have enabled us to see that, among ourselves, Quebeckers can define themselves. They have also enabled us to see that our colleagues from elsewhere in Canada accept and value our differences. Our differences are valuable. They do not hurt us; rather, they make us better and enable us to express ourselves in many different ways. Obviously, our ability to express ourselves in French strengthens Canada.

In the end, when we look at the message we are sending Quebeckers, it is clear that our colleagues in the National Assembly think this is one of the best messages we have sent in a long time. Those who boast about representing all Quebeckers should have listened to Premier Jean Charest last night. As the premier of all Quebeckers, he urged the Bloc members to vote for the Prime Minister's motion. He recommended that they do so graciously and recognize the existing reality. Oddly enough, today the Bloc members are turning a deaf ear to the Premier of Quebec. Very interesting. The people who were supposed to be speaking on behalf of Quebec are turning a deaf ear to the premier. Perhaps, if they do not want to listen to Jean Charest, they could listen to Mario Dumont, who says this is very good and a step in the right direction.

Then again, this broadened the consensus among the members of this House. I am very happy to see that we were not alone to send this message. We have reached out with this motion, and our colleagues at the National Assembly have responded. Personally, as a Quebecker, I am feeling much more in tune today with the majority at the National Assembly than the people in that corner. Together, we are shaping something that will let the Government of Quebec know that there are men and women in Ottawa who recognize their difference as well as the needs of a Quebec society that is a nation in our midst. That is obvious.

I am therefore pleased that the proponents of slash and burn tactics got burned, and it was their own doing. We responded to provocation by not letting ourselves be divided. We will not allow anyone to push us around just because they are using some tactic. They were so sure of themselves, with their prepared speeches saying that the Prime Minister said no and that we Liberals were all over the map. Viewing the country as much more important than our respective parties on this momentous occasion, we all came together and supported the motion.

The people of Quebec will not be fooled. They know full well that, on the eve of the Liberal convention, the Bloc Québécois was intent on driving a wedge between us. It did not do so in an effort to foster unity among Quebeckers or to give greater leverage to Quebec, but rather to weaken Quebec and then be able to cry humiliation. That is why I am criticizing Bloc members for not playing the role they purport to be playing.

• (1615)

They claim to be the defenders of Quebec and Quebec's interests. It was not in Quebec's interest to try to divide this House and send a negative message to Quebeckers. That is why I think that our fellow Quebeckers will sense a generosity of spirit, a harmony of spirit with other Canadians, and I really want to pay tribute to my own colleagues as well.

This is not an easy debate. For some, the concept of nation has a meaning that goes beyond words. In that sense, our colleagues on this side of the House have also made progress. I think it is important that their thinking has evolved. This is a step forward, and it will enable federalists in Quebec to say that it is not true that Quebec is isolated; it is not true that we have to accept the Bloc's version of history. It is not true because the rest of the country is reaching out.

*Business of Supply*

There is still much to be done. Clearly, this has to be seen as an olive branch. Certainly, we are going to keep calling on this government every day to keep its promises to Quebec and the other provinces. For example, the government is saying that it is going to do more in terms of transfers to the provinces, but ultimately, it is doing less. We have noted that weakness. We will judge the government not only on its resolutions, but on its actions, and we will wage a partisan battle in due course.

I could have voted in favour of the motion, despite the Bloc's bad faith. I had nothing against the original wording of this motion, but I feel that the Prime Minister's version is far better. Moreover, we would have amended his version if we could. But since it was not possible for us to make an amendment, I think that the Prime Minister's version is far closer to reality. The National Assembly is very comfortable with it. The Premier of Quebec, their premier, is urging them to vote for the Prime Minister's resolution. They should listen to their premier.

Instead of listening to their premier, they want to play a little game with Mr. Boisclair, who has just reacted, 24 hours later, to what is happening here. There seems to be a disconnect between them.

We know this motion must be understood in its broadest sense. I have no intention of sparking a constitutional debate here today, but personally, as a Quebecker and a Canadian, I hope that one day, when the time is right, we can begin another constitutional round during which we can settle this unresolved issue that is the patriation of the Constitution and the Charter of Rights, the amending formula, and so on.

I hope that we will one day go beyond a mere resolution. But the day will certainly come when Canadians everywhere will be interested in exploring certain constitutional changes. Today, I do not see a consensus, nor is the official government in Quebec calling for changes. Jean Charest is not calling for constitutional changes, and this will not hinder his chances of winning the next election. At present, we must ask ourselves if we are ready to take small steps.

The Bloc's insipid provocation has forced us to take a step that allows us to reach out to Quebeckers. I do not believe that we have solved all the world's problems, but I feel good as a Quebecker and a Canadian. I feel somewhat more comfortable knowing that my own colleagues recognize Quebeckers as a nation and that our colleagues across the floor also recognize what makes Quebec different.

By allowing this recognition, we are probably contributing more to Canada as a whole, because we feel accepted and recognized for what we are. This is true for every aspect of the Canadian population. In order to participate fully in a society, we want to be recognized by our fellow citizens for what we are and what we bring with us.

• (1620)

As for Quebeckers, we bring the history that allows us to claim the title of nation.

The Bloc tried to fool us. You could say they were hoist with their own petard. In the end, the Bloc allowed us to collectively send a clear, unequivocal, non-partisan message to Quebeckers. For this, I am extremely grateful to the Bloc.

**Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have a very simple question for the member for Outremont.

Would Quebeckers no longer form a nation if Quebec were no longer part of Canada?

**Hon. Jean Lapierre:** Mr. Speaker, I am very comfortable with the idea that Quebeckers could decide their destiny through a democratic process. Robert Bourassa said so, and every democrat recognizes this fact.

But a real democrat also recognizes that, twice already, in 1980 and 1995, Quebeckers have chosen Canada. In that sense, I think that, from the moment that Quebeckers choose Canada and choose to contribute fully to Canada, that is the message that has to be acknowledged. Should Quebeckers make a different choice in a democratic process, all the international rules you are aware of would then apply.

For the time being, the motion put forward by the Prime Minister reflects much more closely our daily reality. There are members in this House who want to change Canada's reality. We know that. The problem is that a majority of Quebeckers do not agree with them. They are always in the minority. In the polls, however twisted the question may be, they remain the minority. They have not moved forward at all in recent years. I realize that this is frustrating to them and that this is why they hope to use humiliation as an excuse, among others, but their tactic is not working. It really blew up in their face this time.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments and I agree with several of them.

My ancestors and my parents are from the province of Quebec.

[*English*]

My ancestors left Quebec and came to Ontario many hundreds of years ago. Part of the reason they left Quebec was to grow this country, to build this country. As my colleague said earlier, the anglophones and francophones and many people from various countries all over the world built this wonderful country into what it is.

I agree with my colleague that yesterday was a special moment in history. There is no question about that. I think that 20, 50, 100 years from now people will realize how important a moment it was. It showed that when somebody wants to hurt this country, hurt the francophones, hurt the anglophones, hurt whomever, we as Canadians will not let that happen. We will rally together as a House, not as a House divided, but as a House unified, with one exception. I was wondering last evening as I reflected on what happened yesterday, does this not prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that the party opposite does not represent Quebeckers. That party wants to tear this country apart, the country which my ancestors and the member's ancestors built.

*Business of Supply*

•(1625)

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Jean Lapierre:** Mr. Speaker, I am a democrat. Therefore in my opinion all those who were elected to this House are equally legitimate and representative. As much as we may have fundamental differences regarding the Constitution, I still have the same respect for all the members of this House, because they have been elected by their fellow citizens.

Actually the real test is not whether or not there are 51 MPs from the Bloc Québécois; it is knowing whether we are able, as federalists, to make contact with the Quebec population—the francophones in particular—and get it involved in this passionate project called Canada. There have been shortcomings in the past. In my opinion, the existence of the Bloc Québécois—I could not speak otherwise—reflects a vacuum at one point in history. There is nothing accidental here. Thus, as much as I think they have to be combated, I also think they have tried out some little tactics in order to divide us and they have not succeeded. It has created this advantage. In the end, each member is here in this House legitimately. Everyone is democratically elected and deserves our respect.

Finally, whether we are different from you or from others, we have to respect one another in our differences. In a democracy, the people are always right.

[*English*]

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I still feel the effects of yesterday's great moment in the House. I agree with other members present that it was a defining moment. The words of respect that flowed for Quebec have to be extended to all members of the House.

I am concerned when I hear the message in relation to the motion before us. In his initial remarks, the member for Outremont instead of talking in a measured way about the motion, there was an attack. I do not think that attack belongs here, and I am very concerned about that. I believe that kind of discussion probably belongs in the Liberal leadership convention next week.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Jean Lapierre:** Mr. Speaker, I do not know where he got that. The reality is that this debate is taking place because the Bloc Québécois tried to get involved in the Liberal leadership race and tried to embarrass the Conservative government. This is not great strategy. Its strategy is so clear and open that we have all seen that they are caught up in it and do not know how to back out of it now. We have all seen it. All the media watching us know that the Bloc is completely tangled up in its tactic.

The Bloc Québécois has been here since 1990. But they choose this week to ask for a resolution about the Quebec nation, no doubt inspired by the federal Liberal supporters. Come on!

As much as I would like to say that the resolutions in this House are always nobly motivated and nation-building, in this case, it was not noble at all. It was to try and trip us up. The truth is that it has had the opposite effect and I am very pleased with the results. In this sense, the Bloc members have served a purpose. For once, we have had a unanimous motion by all federalist parties and, as a result, they

have united us in a cause greater than each of our own parties. That is quite an achievement.

•(1630)

**Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to set the record straight about something my Liberal colleague said. I think he misled the House earlier when he quoted Mr. Boisclair. I would like to remind him that Mr. Boisclair said earlier today in the media that the text of the motion sends a false message about a united Canada because Quebec did not sign the Constitution, and that the Conservatives' motion is a motion of convenience more than anything else. It has no real meaning and is merely symbolic.

I would like my colleague to tell me why he cannot vote on a simple motion that recognizes Quebecers as a nation unless that motion contains the words “united Canada”. Why the words “united Canada”?

**Hon. Jean Lapierre:** Mr. Speaker, the member for Drummond should have talked to her leader a little earlier today. He was ready to add the words “currently in a united Canada” to his own motion. That is what he suggested to the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie. He was ready to add that to his text as long as the word “currently” was in there.

So the leader of the Bloc Québécois was ready to recognize the existence of a united Canada. Frankly, that surprised me, but I thought that maybe he had become tangled up in the intricacies of his own strategy yet again. Still, he made the offer. Mr. Boisclair should be very insulted by the offer the leader of the Bloc Québécois made to the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie with respect to the amendment. He offered to include the words “united Canada” in his amendment.

Mr. Boisclair, the leader of the Bloc Québécois is double-crossing you. Maybe he wants your job.

[*English*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Labrador, the Trans-Labrador Highway.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to participate in this very important debate today, a debate that has been brought on by the Prime Minister of Canada, who made a very bold move but a very correct move at a time when leadership was demanded and leadership was found, and it was not found wanting.

I will be sharing my time, Mr. Speaker, with the member for Mégantic—L'Érable, my colleague in the House.

There are a couple of points with which I want to start.

Let me very clear, today's debate, which the Bloc Québécois has brought to the House, has long been fueled by political actors for debatable and questionable purposes. In bringing this debate to the House, the members of the Bloc want, above all else, to refuse to acknowledge the truth. That truth is Canada is a federation that works. It works because of our heritage, the heritage of a decentralized country, the heritage of a federation that recognizes the realities and specificities of our provincial and federal partners.

*Business of Supply*

All regions and provinces have benefited from the decentralized qualities of the Canadian federation. Those qualities have more generally contributed to the vitality and development of all Canadians, especially Quebecers. I am proud to take part in today's debate and to take the opportunity to remind the Bloc, once again, that it is wrong to depict the Canadian federation as a straitjacket that is thwarting Quebec's development.

Indeed, I do not understand why the Bloc is so stubbornly belabouring themes that do not even need to be questioned. It is obvious to everyone that Quebecers live and flourish in a province that has its own specificity, allowing the francophone majority to affirm itself and have its exceptional identity respected. It is also obvious that this society, which is so rich and so special, allows for the presence and development of multi-ethnicity and plural identities.

What a great success story, but to what can such an accomplishment be attributed? If we buy into the Bloc's logic, we arrive at conclusions that disturb me. If we buy into the Bloc's credo, we reject all the achievements that make Canada a decentralized federation based on respect for differences as it was founded in 1867. If we share the Bloc's ideas, we are admitting that since then the exceptional quality of the language, culture and institutions of Quebecers have never found their place within our federal system. In short, this means admitting that respect for differences and respect for the spirit of federalism are illusions that have nothing to do with Canada's evolution and Quebec's development. I soundly reject those theories.

Should we ignore the facts? Should we ignore history? We have such a striking reality before our eyes, but we still need to debate it. I ask again, for what reason?

It is clearly so difficult to sum up in a single word the diversity of Quebec society and Canadian society. Quebecers have been marked throughout our history by a will constantly reaffirmed by generations of men and women to promote and defend their rights and preserve their cultural and linguistic heritage, and they have succeeded brilliantly within the federation of Canada.

Should we contradict that? Quebecers also belong to a community that has strong tools for development, progress and prosperity. Should we contradict that? Yet let us recall the words of Mr. Landry, who admitted himself that Quebecers had obtained a remarkable degree of development and vitality because they had the legal a financial tools similar to those of a nation.

I believe instead, and I am convinced of this and I emphasize it, that it is precisely the Canadian federal system that has allowed the vitality and development of Quebecers and their cultural, linguistic and institutional richness. Our federation enjoys extensive flexibility so let us not deny the achievements of our history and our tradition. Let us not refute the intentions of the founders of the Canadian federation. They were aware of the need to recognize the diversity, differences and specificities of all partners of the federation. We owe much of that to the very presence of Quebecers themselves.

•(1635)

Quebeckers fully participated in the founding of Canada, supported it, knowing full well that their specificity and their

differences would be respected within it. That flexibility, which is particular to a federation, has served not only Quebecers but it has also served all of Canada. Every province, every territory, and every region has been able to benefit from it and contribute to it through their own vitality and development.

Within a federal framework Quebecers have been able to safeguard their economic development and affirm the specificity and vitality that has not been limited within their own borders, but has spread throughout the globe through the spirit of a unique culture and won the recognition and respect of the entire world.

I admit, and this is reflected in the government's decisions and actions, that our federation is also obviously a work in progress, as indeed any political system is, be it federal or unitary. It would be ridiculous to assert that a federal system is established so that it can no longer evolve.

Indeed, how can it not evolve in response to circumstances and the many changes that come our way? How can we not recognize the significance of new issues that emerge that may affect the quality and the life of Canadians and Quebecers, issues that we must address in an increasingly competitive world? It is that inevitable evolution that the Canadian government wanted to respond to through the concept of federalism of openness.

We have already seen that new approach in action, based on respect for differences and the spirit of federalism as Canada's founders wanted. Just look, for example, at Quebec's participation at UNESCO, at the objective we have set to restore fiscal balance, and at our commitment to respect areas of provincial jurisdiction.

Through this concept of federalism of openness we wanted to ensure that our heritage would be forever preserved. By adopting the federalism of openness, we have sought, and still seek, to ensure that the spirit of federalism remains, that it continues to serve the needs of a decentralized federation and that, accordingly, the full vitality and development of Quebecers and Canadians is assured.

Through a federalism of openness, I wanted to respond to the will of Quebecers and Canadians, to their will to strengthen our federation by working more closely with our partners, fully respecting the powers and jurisdictions of each. Such cooperation also means a profound respect for our partners and a will to draw on the experience and expertise of all for the common good.

The vast majority of Quebecers are rightly proud of their Quebec identity and their Canadian identity. What they want above all, like the majority of all Canadians, is for their governments to work in the common interest of all of our fellow citizens and agree to forge a genuine partnership throughout the country based on solidarity and respect for diversity.

Canada can work harmoniously if it is based on consultation and cooperation by all orders of government. We can see that this whole debate that was fuelled by the Bloc has nothing to do with the words and intentions of the government and the citizens of Canada.

We should instead look more closely at the achievements of the Canadian federation and the spirit of federalism as an inclusive and evolving principle for the well-being and development of not only Quebecers but of all Canadians.

*Business of Supply*

Our government is keenly aware of the role that Quebeckers have played in the building of our country. They obviously continue to play a key role within the Canadian federation by drawing on their strengths and their many assets, by giving free rein to their creativity recognized worldwide, and by contributing to a Canadian political unity through their specificity and their enriching culture, and their contribution of all of these attributes to the development of Canada as a whole.

●(1640)

All Canadians and Quebeckers are connected through our past, through our present and for the future. If we work together for the common good of all, that future will be bright, for together we can do great things.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the original Bloc Québécois motion asked parliamentarians to recognize that Quebeckers form a nation. Period.

We avoided tying recognition of the Quebec nation to other considerations so that it would be acceptable to all, sovereignists and federalists alike. This motion is not an acknowledgment of Quebec as a sovereign state. Quebeckers will decide that question in accordance with the democratic rules established by the National Assembly. Unlike the Bloc Québécois motion, that of the Prime Minister imposes a partisan condition. The Prime Minister has tied the existence of the Quebec nation to its belonging to a united Canada.

The Quebec nation is currently found within Canada. We recognize this fact and that is why we amended our motion accordingly. However, we cannot expect this nation, which exists within Canada, to cease to exist if it were no longer tied to Canada. We are a nation because we are what we are, no matter what future we choose. We are a nation, unconditionally. That is the bottom line.

[*English*]

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Mr. Speaker, most of our ancestors came to this country some time ago. My ancestors came here from Scotland in 1749. I am the fifth generation on the farm I live on in Nova Scotia, and I am the ninth generation in the province.

At the turn of the century in Nova Scotia, 80% of the population spoke Gaelic. School was taught in Gaelic. We had the first Gaelic newspaper outside of Ireland and Scotland, and for many years the only one.

Members would be hard pressed to find 1,000 or 2,000 Gaelic speakers in Nova Scotia today. Most of us can say “thank you” or “to your health”, a few words, a few greetings and a few other things, but the culture has died because it was overwhelmed by the majority that surrounded it, plain and simple.

I want to speak directly to the motion. The motion is partisan. The Bloc motion is problematic and mischievous. Quite frankly, it is meant to cause trouble to the Liberals during their leadership debate and the Prime Minister rose above all of that. He put the country first and introduced another motion that will unite all Canadians.

●(1645)

**Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my honoured colleague for the comments that he made.

He mentioned that the motion that the Bloc presented to the House is problematic and mischievous. I agree with him. This motion was put forward for the wrong reasons. Sometimes when we do things for the wrong reasons, it comes back to haunt us.

The Prime Minister in his speech yesterday said something that I would like my honoured colleague to comment on. He said that maybe it was a good thing that the Bloc put this motion forward. It may be a little over 24 hours since the Prime Minister has spoken. Now we seem to see a country that is rallying. We seem to see the House rallying and we seem to realize that this is a momentous occasion in the history of Canada.

What does my colleague think of the Prime Minister's comment that maybe, although the Bloc thought it was being mischievous, this is a good thing. I would like to have his comments on that.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Mr. Speaker, one only had to look at the response from our colleague and the leader of the Bloc Québécois immediately following the Prime Minister's announcement in the House and his reaction to that announcement to understand that for certain the fox had been caught among the chickens, and was unable to wreak the havoc that was expected.

Again, I want to commend the Prime Minister on his leadership role on a question that has dogged previous prime ministers and Canadian parliamentarians for many years. He has taken the initiative and been forthright. He has shown the foresight to deal with the issue once and for all, and certainly to deal with it in the proper manner in the House as it should be dealt with and to the benefit of the country.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Christian Paradis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I think it is fundamentally important to participate in this debate on the motion that the Bloc Québécois has introduced in the House in which it is calling for recognition of Quebeckers as a nation. That in itself does not surprise me, and I doubt that many of my colleagues are astonished.

This is not the first time that the Bloc has raised the subject of Quebec's national identity in this House. It does not do this to resolve the issues facing Quebeckers. Nor does it do this to contribute to improving how our federation works for all Canadians, Quebeckers included. It does it solely and for the single and alleged purpose of demonstrating that Quebec comprises a collective entity that is suffocating in a political framework within which it cannot flourish—a system that is keeping it down. Such are the Bloc's real intentions. Nothing else.

To call, as the Bloc is doing, for recognition of Quebeckers as a nation without reference to a united Canada is to say, in other words, that Quebec cannot be in charge of its development in all realms of activity within the Canadian federation, and to refuse to recognize that Quebeckers are part of Canada. No one can seriously argue that position.

*Business of Supply*

Quebec consists of over seven million inhabitants who make up a majority francophone society, and two thirds of the anglophones who live within its territory speak French. Quebec is North American by its geography and French by its origins, and its goal is to be a pluralistic society, open to the world. In addition to French and English, a number of other languages are spoken there. Quebec's heritage, which bears the stamp of the aboriginal and American cultures, therefore occupies a unique position on our continent.

Quebec has always been able to make the influence of this cultural heritage felt, this heritage which is uniquely its own, both within its own territory and in every corner of the international community. It goes without saying that French occupies a central position within that culture, because it is spoken by a very large majority of its inhabitants, but it is a dynamic culture that is also expressed in the arts of all kinds. Whether they be writers, composers, woodcarvers, painters, sculptors, poets, choreographers, filmmakers, actors on stage or screen, singers, dancers, musicians, directors—these artists play an active role in promoting that culture and enabling it to flourish.

The very richness of their culture is one of the characteristics that make Quebecers a nation within a united Canada, and our government agrees with that statement. There is one point, however, that we must stress in the context of this debate: why does the Bloc Québécois demand it of this House—because, let us be frank, it matters little in the Bloc's eyes whether we support this motion or not. As long as Quebec continues to operate within Canada, no form of recognition of the uniqueness of Quebec could satisfy the Bloc members. The political agenda of the Bloc Québécois lies elsewhere, and what it is trying to do is to prepare the ground for Quebec's accession to independence, even though its option has already been rejected more than once by the people of Quebec.

At a time when nations are seeking to delegate part of their sovereignty to supranational organizations so as to strengthen their bonds, Quebec and Canada have the huge advantage of having reached a degree of integration that can only serve them both. The separatist approach, that is, the Bloc approach, proposes exactly the opposite of what has been observed elsewhere in the western world. Taking this utopian path is the equivalent of playing with the future of Quebec and going against the current trends in economic development.

The motion before us is indicative of the Bloc's presence in this House. The question we must ask is: does this motion contribute anything constructive to the current political debate and in what way would Quebec be better equipped to meet the challenges of the 21st century?

This is not the sort of question the Bloc Québécois is used to asking itself, since this is not the perspective from which it justifies its presence in the House of Commons. To listen to the Bloc members, its party is here to defend the interests of Quebec, while promoting the separation of Quebec from the rest of Canada, right here, in this Parliament. In fact what it is really defending is its secessionist ideology, not the ideology of Quebecers. The Bloc Québécois is proposing to Quebecers a permanent opposition. The Bloc Québécois is harming Quebec's right to affirm itself. Quebecers have shaped Canada, in addition to being a founding people. Why deny this?

Of course, the Bloc can give the impression of collaborating with us in good faith by regularly supporting any legislation which it could not oppose in any case. Some things are so obvious that that they cannot be missed by anyone, not even a member of the Bloc. But the basic dilemma of this party does not lie only in the gap in logic between its presence in Ottawa and its true *raison d'être*.

There also exists another fundamental contradiction in the *raison d'être* of this party, namely, that it promotes virtue, defends the great principles, appeals to the most noble attitudes, fosters solidarity—at the same time as separation—but with this important distinction, which it soft-pedals: the Bloc Québécois will never be in power.

● (1650)

It does not want to be in power, because it does not believe in this country. It is playing a waiting game and has been doing so for a long time now. In 1995, with the second referendum approaching, did the Bloc not say that sovereignty was magic and that one wave of the magic wand would change everything? That is the sort of argument the Bloc used to try to convince Quebecers to separate Quebec from the rest of Canada.

For the benefit of those people watching who still have doubts about the real purpose of this party and the internal conflicts that sometimes result, I will quote two gems. The first comes from the November 8, 1997 issue of *Le Droit* and features the member from Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean. Keep in mind that this quote is from nine years ago. He said:

The Bloc is a party that was born of circumstance, specifically after the failure of Meech, because the momentum existed that would enable us to achieve sovereignty. We nearly succeeded the last time, but we came up short...[The Bloc] can afford to go on for some time. But our days are numbered.

It is worth noting that the member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean said nine years ago that the Bloc's mandate, which it obtained in the June 1997 general election, was to be the party's last. Yet three general elections have taken place since.

He also said at the time, "It is a long and hard slog for the Bloc in Ottawa because of the lack of interest in the sovereignist option in Quebec". I wonder what he thinks of the length of time nine years later.

In any event, the member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean was quickly called to heel by his leader, just as the member for Richelieu, who today is the member for Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour and has represented his riding for 22 years in this House, had been two months earlier for a different reason. He stated in the September 11, 1997 issue of *Le Droit*:

We have to show that federalism is not advantageous for Quebec. Sometimes, it appeared to be working. Now, we will be able to take it apart at our leisure.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think I need to add anything further. Instead of being subtle, the member for Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour was candid, without meaning to be and without realizing it. This is the sort of information we need to keep in mind when we see Bloc members trying to block.



*Business of Supply*

•(1655)

**Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I really wish the member who has just spoken would explain to us why he absolutely wants to make this a debate on sovereignty, which is certainly not our intention.

That is a question that had been dealt with, throughout history, as has the fact that the Quebecois nation has always been a nation.

As far back as April 1946, Maurice Duplessis spoke of the Canadian confederation as a contract of union between two nations. In November 1963, Jean Lesage referred to the Quebecois as a people, as a nation. In February 1968, Daniel Johnson Sr. said that “The Constitution should not have as its sole purpose to federate territories, but also to associate in equality two linguistic and cultural communities, two founding peoples, two societies, two nations”.

It goes back to before the arrival of English-speaking people in America. In 1667, Jean Talon already recognized that the French who were here constituted a different people. That is not far from a nation. In 1756, de Bougainville, on his return from Quebec, said: “It seems that we are a different nation”.

There is more, and it is also significant. In October 2003, when the Liberals had just taken power in Quebec, the National Assembly adopted a unanimous resolution reaffirming that the people of Quebec form a nation .

Why are you so bent on adding “within a united Canada”, unless it is because you want to reopen the debate on sovereignty? Without doubt, we could have that debate, but that was certainly not our original intention. It is not the Bloc Québécois that put the nationhood issue in the news. It was the candidates for the leadership of the Liberal party. I do not understand why you insist on having this debate. I wish you would explain it to me. Why are you so determined to add something? When, without that addition, you say, “We would be saying exactly the same thing as the unanimous National Assembly with a federalist majority”.

**Mr. Christian Paradis:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

First of all, you have to understand that, for my part, I am in agreement with what I have heard here today. I believe that the Bloc Québécois put forward this motion with the aim of laying a trap for both the official opposition and the Conservatives. That is self-evident.

That being said, one thing is certain. From the beginning, we have seen the members of the Bloc shouting themselves hoarse and generally getting worked up in the so-called defence of Quebec's best interests. Is that really what people want?

We are advocating recognition of Quebecers as a nation within a united Canada. Why? Because that is the fact today. I agree: all the quotes from the parties and leaders that my colleague has read are true. However, no one in those movements was a separatist. As this motion is coming from a separatist party, this absolutely has to be clarified. I want to say this. The Bloc is always talking about defending the interests of Quebec. It is on the defensive, whereas we, forming a government that believes in a united Canada, we are talking about promoting the interests of Quebec.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Christian Paradis:** We believe that we can promote them within one structure, within a united Canada, and that is what is important. This may shock my friends opposite, but it is the reality. Let us proceed. Let us leave the defence and go on the offence. We must promote the interests of Quebec. I am proud to be a Quebecker, just as my colleagues across the way are, and I do not believe in the association they have been trying to bring about here for the last 13 years.

•(1700)

[*English*]

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate what my hon. colleague just said but I still go back to my point that I do believe it was a very deliberate, distracting and mischievous motion that the Bloc brought forward. It was caught and now it is trying to send the message that somehow the motion was something that it was not, which is absolutely incorrect.

The Prime Minister took some risk in seeking unanimity among federalist opposition parties and the government—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** The Hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Christian Paradis:** Mr. Speaker, one thing is certain. I salute the Prime Minister for his leadership on this matter. As he said yesterday, it is a fact. Quebecers form a nation within a united Canada.

Everyone knew it. Everyone is in agreement on this fact. My colleague opposite may not agree with the words “within a united Canada”, but everyone else does. Now, a federal forum may not be the place to say it, but we were asked and we are responding.

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to take part in the Bloc Québécois opposition day. As already indicated by the motion, our aim here today is to receive recognition that Quebecers form a nation.

I would also remind the House that an amendment was put forward by the Bloc Québécois in order to add the fact that the Quebec nation is currently within Canada.

Since today's debates began, we have heard all sorts of statements, judgments and impugning of motives—and the description is a fair one—on the part of members of this House, both from the Liberal Party and more particularly from the governing party, the Conservatives.

Some people believe that the Bloc Québécois motion is partisan and others feel it was a trap that the Bloc Québécois tried to set here in this House. Still others believe that, fundamentally, this Bloc motion is no more and no less than a blue print for sovereignty.

*Business of Supply*

The motion, tabled this morning and debated by the Bloc Québécois, bears rereading. First, it states that Quebecers form a nation, not that Quebec is a nation. This is an important nuance, because the fact that we attribute the term “nation” to people or groups of people, such as Quebecers, is a simple acknowledgement of fact. And the perception of the word “nation”—which apparently makes some people break out in hives—as a “country” is not the intended meaning of the motion that was tabled.

On the contrary, it was the motion tabled by the government and that refers to this nation in the context of a united Canada that is partisan, because it inevitably triggers a debate over two political options, that is, federalism versus sovereignty.

It seems important to me to set a number of things straight today. Could this be a trap or a blueprint for sovereignty? I encourage the members to read the motion over, together with the one adopted by Quebec's National Assembly on October 30, 2003, by which it reaffirmed that the people of Quebec form a nation. The latter is practically identical to the one put forward by the Bloc Québécois. To the extent that this motion put before the National Assembly was unanimously adopted not only by the Parti Québécois, but also by the Quebec Liberal Party and the Action démocratique, both of which are federalist parties, does this mean that the National Assembly adopting this motion represents a blueprint for sovereignty? To state the question is to answer it.

So, the motion put forward by the Bloc Québécois today seeks nothing more, nothing less than recognition of the fact that Quebecers form a nation, something we wish the federal government and this House would have recognized.

Why do we form a nation? First, because we share a common land to which we belong and which is known as Quebec.

Also, we share a common culture characterized by great diversity, a unique Quebec film industry, creative artists who put their art to the service of the Quebec nation to express our common values.

In addition, we want to share a common history, which just keeps evolving, building on our past, and which includes Quebecers of old stock, of course, but also Quebecers by adoption, who help build Quebec society as we know it and will know it in the future.

Then there is the fact that, in Quebec, we share a common language, namely French. We are part of the 2% of the North American population trying to survive in this linguistic sea where we are the minority.

● (1705)

We have had to put in place mechanisms enabling us to continue to work, live and evolve in French because we have institutions, because we have a National Assembly that makes legislative changes and that is essentially an institution and a place where the Quebec consensus can be expressed on national as well as international issues.

In Quebec, we have the charter of human rights and freedoms and the charter of the French language that provides the greatest number possible of guarantees enabling us to continue living in French. In the 1960s, we decided to use the state as our primary engine of economic development in Quebec by creating the Caisse de dépôt et

placement du Québec, equipping ourselves with solid mechanisms, such as the Commission des valeurs mobilières du Québec, and with many strong tools appropriate for a nation that wishes to take its place on the international scene and to take control of its destiny without being contemptuous of English Canada. That is not the kind of debate we are having. We merely wish to reaffirm that Quebec has the right to live and to express itself in French, to share a common culture and history. This affirmation of the Quebec nation, as I mentioned earlier, was reiterated on October 30, 2003, by the members of the Quebec National Assembly, by both federalists and sovereigntists, who unanimously adopted a motion stating that the Quebec National Assembly reaffirmed that the Quebec people form a nation.

Instead of respecting this consensus in Quebec that had been confirmed by the National Assembly, instead of allowing this House and this government to accept the basic premise of the National Assembly's proposal, the government decided, no more and no less, to change the elements of this motion. It decided to include in this motion, which will be voted on, the concept of recognizing the people of Quebec in the context of a united Canada. What does that mean? It means that recognizing the Quebec nation is conditional upon staying in Canada, in a united Canada, as it is.

My colleague, the hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin was absolutely right and his question was pertinent. Why is it that the Quebec nation cannot be recognized in a context that excludes a united Canada.

If this united Canada were left out of the motion, could the federal government recognize the existence of the Quebec nation?

I have a few seconds remaining because I am sharing my time with the hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska. I would like the government and this House to recognize the arguments that have been made and the unanimous adoption by the National Assembly on October 30, 2003, of the resolution that Quebec, Quebecers form a nation. We could then continue to agree. We would like this motion that will be adopted, I hope, to be followed by real constitutional changes. Otherwise this is just symbolic. How many times in this House have we adopted motions that were not followed by concrete action on the part of the federal government?

Let us hope that any motion we vote on here will allow Quebec to be recognized, once and for all, as a nation.

● (1710)

**Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, earlier, at the beginning of his remarks, my colleague mentioned that some Conservative and Liberal members in this House were in fact impugning motives, in the same way that people often pass value judgments when they run out of arguments.

I wonder if my colleague could comment on the remarks made by the member who spoke just before him. He talked about the Bloc's presence in this House being almost illegitimate, as if Bloc members had not been democratically elected here. I think such comments are to be included with those insidious remarks that have no place here. We live in a democracy and we are fully entitled to represent people here. Indeed, we are here because we were democratically and legitimately elected.

I wonder if the hon. member could elaborate on this.

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is probably referring, among other comments, to those made by the member for Mégantic—L'Érable. This debate should remain civilized. It is important to have different views in this House. We may not agree on some issues, but there is a fundamental element here in that, to my knowledge, we were all elected on the basis of a clear agenda. Each member of this House was elected by voters. Therefore, each member has legitimacy.

We are asking the government to be very cautious. The government should know and understand that as long as we are in this House, we will continue to protect the interests of Quebec. Indeed, this is the mandate that we were given, and this is the mandate that we intend to fulfill.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

• (1715)

[English]

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Call in the members.

*And the bells having rung:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the recorded division stands deferred until Monday, November 27, at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

Is there perhaps unanimous consent to see the clock as 5:30 p.m. so that we can commence with private members' business?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*Private Members' Business*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

### NATIONAL PEACEKEEPERS' DAY ACT

The House resumed from October 5 consideration of the motion that Bill C-287, An Act respecting a National Peacekeepers' Day be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see that the fan club is starting to expand on the other side.

It is my pleasure to rise today on Bill C-287, An Act respecting a National Peacekeepers' Day.

First of all, I want to say that I am a fan of everything that the United Nations represents when it comes to international conflict prevention and assistance for people in difficulty.

Before being elected as the member for Gatineau, I was a secondary-school teacher. I want to say that in the five schools in which I had the pleasure of teaching, in Saskatchewan, Quebec and Ontario, I either helped to establish UN debating clubs or participated in simulations of the United Nations as an ambassador or the president of the General Assembly. I always took it upon myself to emphasize to my students and other participants how important multilateralism is for solving the difficulties faced by the nations of the world.

In regard to Bill C-287, the Bloc Québécois is in favour of it. The strengths of this bill are, first of all, that it recognizes the very important role played by UN peacekeepers.

Second, the Bloc Québécois is very much in favour of multilateralism as a method of settling international conflicts. The UN peacekeepers embody this approach.

Third, the peacekeepers who have died on UN missions deserve to be commemorated.

Fourth, this will give our Prime Minister an opportunity to discover peaceful uses for our army.

The only shortcoming that we should examine is the date of the commemoration on August 9. I will explain why we do not like this. We prefer a date that is already universally recognized: May 29. We think that the peacekeepers should be honoured in a more international context. There is already an International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, and it is May 29. We think that this date is more appropriate than August 9 in order to demonstrate our solidarity with the entire international community and the choice it has already made.

*Private Members' Business*

It is quite appropriate to pay tribute to the peacekeepers. They are a central element in multilateralism, a principle of conflict resolution that is dear to Quebeckers. The essentially international characteristic of the peacekeeping missions authorized by the United Nations Security Council grants unparalleled legitimacy to any intervention and attests to the determination of the entire international community to take tangible steps to deal with the crises that occur from time to time. However, peacekeeping operations alone are not the appropriate instrument for every situation. They must be accompanied by a peace process, not simply replace this peace, which is so dear to us and which must be real to everyone around the world.

United Nations peacekeeping operations are an impartial and very widely accepted way of sharing the burden and of acting effectively among the ordinary people. Peacekeepers are present throughout the world, as we well know.

The 18 operations directed by the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, are being carried out on four continents in 10 time zones, employ more than 90,000 people and have a direct influence on the lives of hundreds of millions of others. Close to 64,200 people are currently serving as soldiers and military observers, and roughly 7,500 are in police forces.

• (1720)

The Department of Peacekeeping Operations also employs nearly 5,250 international civilian personnel, over 11,300 local civilian personnel and approximately 1,720 United Nations volunteers. One hundred and eight countries contribute military and police personnel to UN peacekeeping operations.

The UN is the largest multilateral contributor to post-conflict stabilization worldwide. Only the United States deploys more military personnel in the field than the United Nations. There is therefore still a long way to go before multilateralism is the most commonly used form of conflict resolution.

In 2005 alone, UN peacekeeping operations rotated 161,386 military and police personnel, made 864 flights into or out of the field, and carried 271,651 cubic meters of cargo.

The actions of peacekeepers are usually effective. Since 1945, UN peacekeepers have undertaken 60 field missions and negotiated 172 peaceful settlements that have not only ended regional conflicts but also enabled people in more than 45 countries to take part in free and fair elections.

UN electoral assistance has become a regular and increasingly important feature in UN peacekeeping operations, bringing democracy to people everywhere on Earth.

UN peacekeeping is cost-effective. A survey by Oxford University economists found that international military intervention under Chapter VII of the UN Charter—action taken when peace is under threat—is the most cost-effective means of reducing the risk of conflict in post-conflict societies.

The approved DPO budget for the period from July 1, 2006, to June 30, 2007, was approximately \$5 billion. This represents less than 0.5% of global military spending.

UN peacekeeping operations are less expensive than other forms of international intervention. UN costs per peacekeeper, as compared to the cost of troops deployed by the U.S., the developed countries, NATO or regional organizations such as the African Union, show that the UN is the least expensive option by far.

A study by the U.S. Government Accountability Office estimated that it would cost the U.S. about twice as much as the UN to conduct a peacekeeping operation similar to the UN stabilization mission in Haiti: \$876 million, compared to the UN budgeted \$428 million for the first 14 months of the mission. Other comparative advantages of UN peacekeeping cited by this study included its multinational nature, which provides impartiality and legitimacy, burden sharing, involvement of member states with experience in post-conflict peace-building operations and a structure for coordinating international assistance.

May 29 is a more appropriate date for commemorating peacekeepers. That is the date chosen by the United Nations as the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers. Indeed, May 29 commemorates Security Council Resolution 50, which was passed on May 29, 1948, and which provided for the establishment of the first United Nations peacekeeping operation.

• (1725)

We believe that May 29 should have been preferred over August 9, because it is more universal, in keeping with a principle at the very heart of the institution that the peacekeepers represent.

As for August 9, it reflects a form of self-centredness or isolationism that is not consistent with the principle we want to convey to future generations on that occasion.

I will conclude by saying that August 9 refers to the day in 1974 when Canada suffered the heaviest losses in a single day during a UN mission in the Middle East. May 29 is an appropriate date. I urge the House to vote in favour of this bill with the date of May 29.

[English]

**Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to speak today to Bill C-287, an act respecting a national peacekeepers' day. Specifically, the act would make August 9 national peacekeepers' day and calls for the lowering of the Canadian flag on the Peace Tower to half mast on that day.

In the preamble of the bill, it talks about a great Canadian, Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, who proposed the first United Nations peacekeeping mission. Mr. Pearson won a Nobel Prize for his actions. Those actions moved Canada to the forefront in the world and our country became the leader in keeping the peace with more than 100,000 members of the Canadian Forces participating in peacekeeping and peace support missions, along with many members of Canadian police services.

*Private Members' Business*

The preamble also talks about the reasons for choosing August 9. August 9 was the day in 1974 that nine Canadian Forces' peacekeepers were killed when their plane was shot down en route to Damascus from Beirut. When this bill passes, as I am sure it will since I know everyone in this House respects our peacekeepers, on the ninth day of the ninth month of every year, the flag on the Peace Tower on Parliament Hill will be lowered to half mast to honour not only those nine who lost their lives, but every peacekeeper before or since, either living or dead, who has served or is serving this country so bravely for such a noble cause.

Let me talk about those women and men who serve our country in many capacities within the military. I have a military base in my riding and I have spoken of it on numerous occasions, CFB Comox. I have had the pleasure on several occasions to enjoy the hospitality of the 19 Wing Commander, as well as other officers, their staff and employees at the base.

One of the first things we learn when we visit the base is the military ethos: "Duty with Honour". We learn about the pride that they take in their roles serving our country. 19 Wing Comox has a rich history dating back to 1942 when the base was constructed. It was constructed to protect the strategic Pacific coastline in the second world war. Today, its two operational squadrons fly the Aurora maritime patrol aircraft, the Buffalo search and rescue aircraft and the Cormorant helicopters.

Using the five Aurora airplanes, the pilot and crews of the 407 Maritime Patrol Squadron spend long hours on surveillance missions over the ocean looking for illegal fishing, migration, drugs and pollution, in addition to foreign submarines. They can also perform search and rescue missions using air droppable survival kits.

With six Buffalo aircraft and five Cormorant helicopters, 442 Transport and Rescue Squadron carries out search and rescue operations in the busiest region in Canada. It is a very vast region. As we can see on a map, the area stretches from the B.C.-Washington border to the Arctic and from the Rocky Mountains to 1,200 kilometres out into the Pacific Ocean.

In addition to its operational squadrons, the Wing is home to 19 air maintenance squadrons and a national training school, the Canadian Forces School of Search and Rescue. 19 Wing also supports cadet training at the Regional Cadet Gliding School at HMCS Quadra sea cadet camp. I might add that my young nephew, Gibson, is a proud sea cadet at HMCS Quadra and we are all very proud of him.

The men and women who join our military do so because they want to serve our country. They are proud to do the job we ask them to do. They are honoured to serve their country and I am honoured to have met many of them and to see first-hand their commitment to making the world a better place to live. Many of those women and men join for the exciting career opportunities, many of which I have just mentioned in my overview of 19 Wing Comox. Many of those professions are provided in our military services.

• (1730)

Many of the men and women who join the forces do so because Canada is a world leader in keeping the peace. But our boots on the ground are losing ground. Canada was once a top 10 contributor of

military personnel to United Nations missions. Now we rank 50th out of 95 countries. Less than one-tenth of 1% of the military personnel participating in UN missions are Canadian. Since 2001 our spending commitment to UN operations has only been \$214.2 million of the over \$6 billion on all international missions. That is a mere 3% for peacekeeping.

Sadly, Canada is not alone in having virtually abandoned UN peacekeeping. Most of the western aligned middle power states now contribute very little to UN missions. While Canada ranks eighth in military contributions among the 26 NATO member countries, there are eight non-NATO countries that each contribute more military personnel to UN operations than do all the NATO members combined.

This sends a very strong signal to the rest of the world that Canada no longer takes the same amount of pride in peacekeeping that it once did. It sends the message that war-torn countries looking for help from the UN should not count on Canada for much support. It also sends the message to those women and men who are so bravely serving as peacekeepers that the work they are doing in other countries so far away is not as important as other military commitments where we are spending much more money.

I know that the role of peacekeepers has changed considerably since its inception. I also do not have my head buried in the sand about the dangers of the missions we send our peacekeepers into. I know that they sometimes have to use force, sometimes even kill, or sadly are killed, defending the peace and security of the area they are tasked to defend.

That does not mean the idea of peacekeeping is a thing of the past. We cannot, we must not, lose sight of what everyone in this world ultimately wants: to live in peace and security, to live without war and strife. It is an age-old dream and one which we must never stop working toward.

That is why it is so important to make sure we are giving our military and peacekeepers the tools they need to do the job that we ask them to do. Some of those tools are tangible, such as tanks, airplanes, ships, guns, clothing, food and other necessities, but also support when they are at home, decent wages and benefits, adequate housing, social supports in the communities and supports for families when the parents are deployed.

There are some things that money just cannot buy, and that is knowing that at the end of the day the duty of peacekeepers is honoured by all Canadians. They serve us so proudly, so bravely. They pay the ultimate sacrifice. It is the least we can do by honouring them.

*Private Members' Business*

•(1735)

**Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to respond to a point of order that was raised by the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food on Tuesday, November 21 during debate on Bill C-24, the softwood lumber products export charge act.

I referred to the Minister of International Trade, that he had committed a treasonous act. I was referring to the time when he crossed over from the Liberal Party shortly after the last election to the Conservative Party. I realize that wording was unparliamentary and I would like to withdraw it. Hopefully it will end at that.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** I thank the member for Etobicoke North. Resuming debate.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-287, a bill to recognize a national peacekeepers' day. It is certainly appropriate. Parliament has passed bills in the past and previous ministers have also recognized special days. I think of Vimy Ridge Day, April 9, to honour our soldiers who fought at Vimy Ridge in 1917. National Aboriginal Day is in June.

The purpose of the bill is to recognize the tremendous role and the history of peacekeepers in this country since the days of Lester B. Pearson. In 1956 he first proposed at the United Nations a peacekeeping mission with regard to the Suez Canal crisis.

Historically in the world, armies have been involved in combat and often in peacemaking rather than peacekeeping. After the Suez Canal crisis, in November 1956, for the first time countries in the region, including Egypt and Israel, agreed to the proposal to have peacekeepers there. Canada's foreign affairs minister at the time, Lester Pearson, proposed the United Nations expeditionary force to go there and basically separate Egyptian and Israeli troops. For this he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1957.

Canadians have been very proud and have been recognized around the world for their peacekeeping efforts. We have trained. Whether it is on the Golan Heights with Japanese troops, whether it is in Cambodia, or elsewhere, our troops have been recognized for their peacekeeping efforts. People recognize the expertise of Canadians in the peacekeeping field. That is very important.

A national peacekeepers' day would be a day to take time to pause, to think about all of those missions in which Canadians have participated around the world, for example, Cyprus. It would be day to recognize what Canadians have contributed to assist in maintaining not only peace, but also in the promotion of that peace. It is very important to recognize the contribution.

The United Nations under the Security Council gives the power and responsibility to take collective action when it comes to peace and security around the world. For this reason, the international community looks at these types of operations where Canadians and others have played such an important role in the past.

I know all members of the House are very supportive and very proud of the role of our peacekeepers. Over 100,000 Canadian Forces participate in peacekeeping and peace support missions around the world. Regrettably, over 100 have been killed in action over the years.

I would like to stress the importance of a national peacekeeping day. It would be a day to remember, a day to reflect and a day to pause. The Department of Canadian Heritage does a tremendous job in educating Canadians with information packets, brochures, et cetera. I would envision in declaring August 9 national peacekeepers' day, and I will explain why August 9 in a moment, that it would be in part to educate Canadians, particularly young people. It is very important that they understand the role. Why August 9? Because regrettably, 32 years ago on August 9, nine Canadian peacekeepers en route from Beirut to Damascus were killed by a surface missile.

I congratulate the member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskas-ing in proposing this bill and suggesting August 9 as the day, not only to remember those nine brave Canadians who lost their lives in the quest for peace, but also to recognize in a broader sense all of those who have continued to serve and will serve this country in the future, and to pay homage.

I am the son of a World War II veteran who fought on the shores of Normandy through the Battle of the Falaise Gap, through Caen, through Belgium and Holland. Unfortunately he had shrapnel in his legs until the day he died and suffered from the loss of hearing in one ear from being buried alive when his tank was hit by a shell. I was always instilled with the importance of the role of Canadian soldiers.

•(1740)

It is a fact that freedom does not come cheaply. We are engaged in what I would consider to be a peacemaking mission in Afghanistan. Whether it is a peacekeeping role in Cyprus, the fact is that Canadians have always stepped up and contributed effectively over the years. In situations of civil wars, ethnic cleansing, genocides, Canadian peacekeepers have worked to save the lives of many people around the world. They are heroes.

Normally when we think of peacekeepers, we do not think of them as being involved in conflict situations. Regrettably from time to time they could be fired upon by other parties as they were in Bosnia, or when they could hit a mine when travelling along a road. Our peacekeepers put their lives on the line every day.

I am sure all members of this House would join me in supporting the recognition of a national peacekeepers' day on August 9.

I mentioned that over the last 53 years we have seen Canadians participate in many theatres and also assist other countries in the art and the role of peacekeeping. When Canadians wear their blue berets or blue helmets, people know that peacekeepers are there to improve the quality of life for individuals in very difficult situations. They are there to assist in the peace process.

There is no question that sometimes Canadians are not aware of the difference between peacekeeping and peacemaking. Some would argue that in 1993 Somalia was not a peacekeeping mission; it was a peacemaking mission. Afghanistan is a peacemaking mission, although we are there obviously to try to improve the lives of people who are in a very difficult situation.

*Private Members' Business*

Recognition is important. We do not do this lightly. We do not declare national holidays. National peacekeepers' day would not be a bank holiday, or something in that regard. In a sense it would be a day to reflect. I think it is important as a recognition.

Not too far from Parliament Hill there is a monument to Canadian peacekeepers around the world, to their dedication and hard work. It is incumbent upon parliamentarians and Canadians in general not only to recognize the contribution of peacekeepers, but also to help educate people on the role of peacekeeping.

As a former educator, I can say that nothing is more effective than making sure that materials are available in schools. I commend the Department of Canadian Heritage for the tremendous work it does in ensuring that information material is available.

I urge members to support private member's Bill C-287. The member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking is no stranger to this issue. He proposed and we adopted April 9 as Vimy Ridge Day.

This issue is important. I would expect that this would be one of the few debates that would not be acrimonious because I think there is a spirit here for that recognition.

\* \* \*

● (1745)

**MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE**

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following public bill, to which the concurrence of the House is desired.

[*Translation*]

Bill S-5, An Act to implement conventions and protocols concluded between Canada and Finland, Mexico and Korea for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**NATIONAL PEACEKEEPERS' DAY ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-287, An Act respecting a National Peacekeepers' Day, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the issue raised by this private member's bill proposing the establishment of a national peacekeepers' day in Canada. This private member's bill is very sincere and well intentioned but I would, however, like to add some perspective that I feel qualified to offer.

Fifty years ago, Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal Company and that event gave rise to armed conflict with Egypt on one side and Israel, Britain and France on the other. Eighteen hundred and fifty-three lives were lost. British prime minister, Anthony Eden, was forced to resign and the British, French and Israeli forces withdrew in March 1957.

However, before the withdrawal, Lester Pearson, Canada's acting cabinet minister for external affairs, went to the United Nations and

suggested creating a United Nations emergency force in the Suez. The United Nations accepted his suggestion and, after several days of tense diplomacy, a neutral force was sent, with the consent of Egyptian President Nasser, stabilizing conditions in the area.

Lester Pearson was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1957 for his efforts. The United Nations peacekeeping force was Lester Pearson's creation and he is considered the father of the modern concept of peacekeeping. Since that time, Canada has lost close 115 personnel on what have been called peacekeeping missions.

In a speech in Edmonton recently, Lieutenant-General Andrew Leslie, Chief of the Land Staff, recalled wryly that it was hard to classify the operations in Croatia and Bosnia as peacekeeping when artillery rounds were routinely whistling overhead. The name that we give to operations in no way changes the sacrifice that Canadian Forces personnel and their families have made in their conduct of those operations.

● (1750)

[*Translation*]

Over the past 50 years, many Canadians have become accustomed to the idea that we are a nation of peacekeepers despite the fact that our soldiers have been assigned mainly to missions other than those carried out by the UN blue berets.

Canada is one of the major military forces in the world for some good and some not so good reasons. The Canadian Forces act as instruments of peace every day. Whether in the First World War, the Second World War, Korea, Suez, Cypress, the Balkans, the first Gulf war, Afghanistan, various missions in the Middle East, roles within NORAD and NATO for about 50 years, and many other missions too numerous to mention, the Canadian Forces have contributed to peace and security.

[*English*]

Although I do not wear any of the traditional peacekeeping medals, I flew thousands of hours of peacekeeping missions in the CF-104 Starfighter and the CF-18 Hornet in North America and Europe. I spent thousands of hours as a flying instructor teaching others to carry out those missions. My flying helmet was not blue but that did not detract from the ultimate objective of every mission that I flew.

Several times during the first hour and a half or so of debate on this bill, the tragic and criminal incident of the shooting down of a Canadian Forces Buffalo aircraft by a Syrian surface to air missile on August 9, 1974, was cited. Nine Canadians were killed during this routine supply mission to Egypt. The Syrians maintained that the attack was an accident but no one bought that story.

*Private Members' Business*

I recall very clearly when I heard the news that day. I was driving southbound on the autobahn in Germany between our bases of Baden Soellingen and Lahr. One of the names that was released was Captain Keith Mirau. Keith and I had been flying instructors together at Gimli, Manitoba on our previous tours. The loss of Captain Mirau and his eight crew members was mourned appropriately.

During and since my career in the air force, I have attended many dozens of funerals mourning the loss of friends and acquaintances who have died in the line of duty in the uniform of the Canadian Forces.

[Translation]

Every one of those losses was tragic, and the families did not distinguish between deaths caused by a CF-18 crashing in Cold Lake, a diving accident near Esquimalt, a submarine fire in the middle of the ocean, a sniper in Cyprus or Bosnia, a vehicle rollover in Wainwright, a gunshot in the Middle East or fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Every member of the Canadian Forces who died in the line of duty represents a sacrifice in the name of peace, and they are all worthy of the title "peacekeepers".

[English]

The hon. member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore wrote in the February 2003 edition of *Policy Options* that the traditional, almost quaint, notion of Pearsonian peacekeeping is dead. He contended that Canada has not adjusted well to the realities of what has been called peace enforcement. He said, "We not only don't contribute enough to peacekeeping, we are not training to do the right kind of peacekeeping, which is combat-capable peace enforcement in zones of conflict, like Afghanistan and the Balkans".

Retired Major General Lewis Mackenzie has argued that the inability of the UN to prevent human slaughter in Bosnia, Somalia and Rwanda would have been solved by firmer military force. He wrote last year that the Canadian Forces needed to adapt by being "light, lethal, strategically mobile and sustainable".

[Translation]

What I am trying to say is that there is a very large grey area between what Canadians have been led to think of as peacekeeping and our military's other activities, including wartime combat.

Like many other countries, Canada sets aside one day to remember Canadians in uniform who gave their lives in the name of freedom, regardless of how they made that sacrifice. That day is Remembrance Day, and we celebrate it every November 11.

[English]

We all spent time in our ridings recently commemorating the courage and sacrifice of Canadian men and women in the cause of peace. Remembrance Day has had more meaning for Canadians in recent years but, as always, the sacrifice to which we pay homage was not in the cause of war but in the cause of peace. Canada has lost over 116,000 courageous men and women in uniform in the cause of peace since 1914.

The Canadian Peacekeeping Veterans Association is an organization that promotes Canada's history in United Nations peacekeeping

operations. Their members have a right to be very proud of their contributions to peace. On their website, the new Book of Remembrance will contain the names of members of the Canadian Forces who died as a result of duty either overseas, outside of or in Canada. To date the criteria is:

In addition to those who died from causes related to service in a "Special Duty Area", the Book will contain the names of all those whose deaths resulted from injury or disease or aggravation thereof that arose out of or was directly connected with military service in other than a "Special Duty Area".

The Canadian Peacekeeping Veterans Association clearly recognizes the equivalence of the sacrifices made by all Canadians in uniform, no matter their mission.

August 9 is already designated and celebrated as Peacekeeping Day. In my view and in the view of virtually every serving and retired military member whom I have canvassed, that is appropriate. Any additional recognition, such as lowering the flag on the Peace Tower or declaring a national holiday, would dilute the significance of November 11.

Allow me to quote a few of the many responses I have received.

A retired colonel and member of UN peacekeeping missions said:

With the advent of the Seventh Book of Remembrance, peacekeepers are now recognized in the Peace Tower and, in my view fall into the same category as wartime fatalities—they died in military service to Canada. Almost all of our provinces now recognize the 9th of August as Peacekeeper's Day. I equate this to the Battle of the Atlantic Day and the Battle of Britain Day ceremonies—celebrated to show respect, concern, admiration and remembrance but being neither a national holiday nor an event requiring the lowering of the Peace Tower flag.

A retired colonel and World War II fighter pilot said:

My view is that a proper recognition of our annual Remembrance Day on November 11th is exactly what we need, exactly what all our generations need as a tribute to the fallen, and those who served our country. I do not favour a special "Peacekeepers Day".

A retired lieutenant-colonel and fighter squadron commander said:

The 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month would seem to me to recognize those who were successful at establishing peace and maintaining the peace or gave their lives in the attempt.

A retired general and former chief of the defence staff said:

I for one believe that we should keep November 11 as our ONLY military day of recognition...where all present, past, living, dead military folks who have and are contributing to our security are honoured and recognized. I do not believe we should dilute the importance of this day...to have a Peacekeepers Day is a BAD idea.

●(1755)

[Translation]

I have heard similar comments, all of which echo that idea, from members of the armed forces at all levels.

I know that the intention behind this motion is honourable, and I am certainly not questioning the motives of the hon. member who introduced it.



[English]

However, as a veteran and a peacekeeper and representing the virtually unanimous opinions that I have received on this issue, I do not support any initiative that would have the effect of watering down the importance of November 11.

I know there is a desire to have this bill go to committee for study and to hear more indepth discussion on the pros and cons of this initiative. For that reason, I will support it at this time.

**Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to stand in the House today to participate in the debate on Bill C-287, An Act respecting a National Peacekeepers' Day.

I have listened very carefully to the remarks made by my colleagues, most recently my colleague, the hon. member for Edmonton Centre. I want to commend the hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, who also works with me on the veterans affairs committee, for bringing this initiative forward. I also want to thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo for her comments earlier in the House.

It is indeed fitting that the debate on the bill has stemmed from the 50th anniversary of the Suez crisis and Remembrance Day less than two weeks ago. Previous speakers have referred to Canada's leadership during the Suez crisis and our country's contribution to many peacekeeping missions in the years since. In fact, I would just like to read a portion from a report from the Library of Parliament, which says:

Over 100,000 Canadians have served in more than 50 separate missions since 1949. UN peace and security operations form the majority of Canada's international military commitments. While peacekeepers come from all branch of Canadian Forces (Army, Navy and Air Force), the Army has provided the vast majority because of the nature of the tasks involved. More recently, thousands of men and women from police forces across the country, Elections Canada, the Corrections Service of Canada and other Canadian governmental and non-governmental agencies have served in peace support missions as well.

Canada's peacekeepers have served their nation with great courage and distinction, and they are continuing to serve the cause of peace in troubled regions all around the globe. Previous speakers have noted that many ceremonies that are organized in communities across Canada on August 9 to commemorate the service and sacrifice of peacekeepers.

I thank our veterans organizations for supporting the bill. May I take this opportunity to salute the leadership of the Canadian Association of Veterans in United Nations Peacekeeping. They led the campaign to win the support of provinces and municipalities for declaring Peacekeepers Day in their respective jurisdictions. They have also been instrumental in organizing the commemorative ceremonies on August 9 as well.

My colleague earlier spoke about the missions involved from peace building to peacemaking to peacekeeping. While there is some debate as to the definition of peacekeeper, I would hope that we give it the widest interpretation possible to be fully inclusive of all Canadian Forces members, members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and other police forces as well as members of the diplomatic corps, who have supported international peace and

### *Private Members' Business*

security operations. This would be very much in keeping with the spirit of recognition and remembrance.

The ceremonies on August 9 give Canadians an opportunity to pay their respects to all those who have worn our uniform in times of peace and war, especially those who paid the ultimate price of giving their lives. We also take the time to remember those men and women in the Canadian Forces who are now placing themselves in harm's way to defend our values of life.

My colleagues have spoken about the other ways in which we honour our peacekeepers. We know that tens of thousands of veterans wear the peacekeeping service medal with great pride. Here in the nation's capital, Canadians can visit the peacekeeping monument, "Reconciliation".

It is appropriate that the House of Commons should be located only a few paces down from the memorial chamber where seven Books of Remembrance are on display. Those books contain the names of those who died serving our country.

Until last November, there were six books in honour of Canadian men and women who died in the first world war, the second world war, the Korean war, the South African war and the Nile expedition as well as the fallen from Newfoundland before it joined Confederation and those who gave their lives serving where my dad served in the merchant marines.

On November 11, 2005, the Year of the Veteran, the Governor General came to Parliament Hill to dedicate the Seventh Book of Remembrance, which is entitled "In Service of Canada". On its pages are the names of those who died while serving Canada since 1947, with the exception of those who died in the Korean war. It includes the names of those Canadians who died on many peacekeeping missions. It is a permanent testament to the enormous risks taken by those who wear a uniform, both at home and abroad.

I would be remiss if I did not remind my colleagues that the Seventh Book is unique, because it will never close. It will also commemorate those in future generations when they give their lives in the service of this great nation, Canada.

● (1800)

We have been reminded all too well in recent weeks of the tremendous sacrifice made by our soldiers. I have visited them, both those who have returned without wounds and those who have returned seriously wounded. I have attended funerals as well.

We have been inspired by their stories and the courage of their families and friends as they cope with the tragic loss of their loved ones. They are in our thoughts and they are most certainly in our prayers. May they take some measure of comfort knowing that our nation will not forget their service and sacrifice.

This brings me to the issue of remembrance. In the past few years, especially during the Year of the Veteran, this year called Share the Story, I have been impressed by the increasing number of Canadians who gather at memorials and cenotaphs in their communities in honour of their local heroes.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

That is the essence of November 11 and it is also the inspiration of August 9, to express our gratitude to those who served our nation and to commemorate the sacrifice of those who lost their lives. In fact, if I have any concern at all regarding this bill, if any concerns have been expressed by the veterans community, and if it is in any danger whatsoever, it is because there may be a danger in obscuring the memorial we have on the 11th day of the 11th month at the 11th hour.

I am also encouraged by the work that our schools are doing to stimulate interest in Canada's military history and heritage. In many schools it was commemorated during Remembrance Week. I would like to applaud the efforts of all those teachers who take the time to organize special learning experiences for their young students.

As Canadian citizens we should not take for granted the sacrifice made by those who lay down their lives so that others may enjoy peace and freedom. It is our collective duty to remember them. They deserve no less.

I think too that we also pay tribute to our veterans through the services and programs we provide to them and the way in which we do so. As my colleagues would know, veterans returning from the second world war had access to a veterans charter, a series of programs and services intended to aid their rehabilitation to civilian life. Over the years, those programs were adjusted in line with the changing needs of our aging veterans.

However, these programs are not well suited to the needs of younger Canadian Forces veterans and earlier this year in April a new veterans charter was put in place. As the Minister of Veterans Affairs said at the time, "The new charter represents a new chapter in Canada's longstanding commitment to take care of those who take care of us at home and abroad".

We are also committed to keeping alive the memory of those whose noble and selfless sacrifice represent the very highest ideals of public service. On August 9 and on November 11 at the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember them. We will remember them.

•(1805)

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** I declare the motion carried. Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

**ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

TRANS-LABRADOR HIGHWAY

**Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the people of Labrador were not satisfied with the answers given on June 16 concerning the Trans-Labrador Highway.

I asked if the Prime Minister's promise to support a cost-shared agreement to complete the Trans-Labrador Highway meant the entire road, including the south coast and phase III. I asked if the Prime Minister committed to fifty-fifty cost-shared funding, as Premier Williams said. The province has already budgeted this non-existent federal money, which is very unusual.

There was no meaningful response to either question.

By way of background, in the 1970s and 1980s, under current Senator Rompkey, federal Liberal governments provided the first major highway funding for Labrador, funding for the Straits highway, and for the Wabush to Churchill Falls road, but in the 1988 roads for rails deal, concocted by the federal and provincial Conservatives, just \$8 million out of over \$800 million went to Labrador. The Tories sold us out.

It took a Liberal government in 1997 to help right this injustice. The \$340 million Labrador transportation initiative funded the reconstruction of the Wabush to Happy Valley-Goose Bay road, the construction of the south coast highway, and several branch roads. It has also funded a portion of phase III, which will link the other two sections, despite the provincial promise to pay for it with its own funds.

Conservatives have never shown an interest in the Trans-Labrador Highway other than during byelection campaigns. In the 1996 byelection, the Reform and the PCs suddenly discovered Labrador. They ridiculed the fifty-fifty funding formula that the premier now calls for. They made lavish highway promises, then disappeared.

In 2005, with another byelection looming, the Conservatives rediscovered Labrador. By then, federal Liberal funding had seen the construction of more highways in Labrador than under the Mulroney and Peckford Conservatives put together.

During that campaign, the current defence minister said that "a Conservative government would commit funds to complete Phase III of the Trans-Labrador Highway" and that it "would share the cost on a 60/40" [federal-provincial] basis", but in the 2006 election the Prime Minister would only vaguely offer "a cost-shared agreement". The sixty-fourty figure was gone.

The premier now says it is fifty-fifty, but the Minister of Transport and the Prime Minister will not confirm it. In a letter to me, the transport minister admits that federal highway plans "have yet to be determined".

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Towns like Labrador City and Happy Valley-Goose Bay are impatient with Conservative inaction. On the coast, residents worry that the Conservatives will ignore their needs altogether. The provincial transportation minister talks of highways and money but makes no mention of a plan for a coastal highway and connecting the unconnected communities.

The provincial transportation minister said in August that he expected a roads deal by next June. More recently he changed the deadline to this Christmas, yet nobody has seen the province's official proposal to the federal government. According to a New Brunswick media report, there is no federal highways program anyway. The transport minister has generously given himself 10 years to come up with one. So much for a deal by Christmas.

We cannot wait for 10 years, so I will ask my question again. Is the Conservative minority government committed to cost-sharing the Trans-Labrador Highway on a fifty-fifty basis? Will this include the whole Labrador Highway from Labrador City to the Straits? Has the province made an official proposal? Is federal funding even available? Will Labrador have a highway deal by Christmas?

• (1810)

**Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak about the funding for the Trans-Labrador Highway.

In Canada highways fall under provincial and territorial jurisdiction which the member knows. I am wondering why the member is part of a party that for 13 years had the opportunity to do whatever it pretty much wanted in Labrador as far as highways were concerned and did absolutely nothing.

Notwithstanding that, we are responsible for national parks highways and a portion of the Alaska Highway which are under federal jurisdiction. Provincial and territorial governments are therefore responsible for deciding on the planning, the construction, the operation and the financing of highways.

We, unlike some governments in the past, do not interfere in provincial jurisdiction. We are there to help Canadians and help provinces fulfill their mandate.

Nevertheless in today's increasingly global environment the Conservative government is going to take action. It recognizes that investments in transportation infrastructure are absolutely crucial to maintaining Canada's competitiveness and most importantly the quality of life of Canadians. That is the most important challenge the Conservative government has and the government is going to fulfill that mandate.

To show what we are doing as a government, in budget 2006 we announced \$16.5 billion over the next four years to improve provincial, territorial and municipal infrastructure. The reason why is because nothing was done by the Liberal government before. It took a Conservative government to make this promise because of 13 years of inaction.

This is an unprecedented amount. It has never happened before and after 13 years of neglect, the people of Newfoundland and

Labrador are looking forward to the results that we are going to get for them.

As stated in the budget a key objective of the funding will be to cost share with the provinces and territories improvements to the core national highway system. Also, the government is considering how the new funding should be used to address the multi-modal priorities identified in the Council of the Federation's report, "Looking to the Future: A plan for investing in Canada's transportation system". What can be more important than transportation for our quality of life and for our economy?

The government is also committed to restoring fiscal balance, something that the Liberal Party has never even identified as being an issue.

During the summer the transport infrastructure and communities portfolio held consultations with provinces, territories and other stakeholders under this Conservative minister's direction on the federal role of infrastructure. We want to have predictable, long term, long track funding, so people can count on it, but also we need to ensure that this funding is done, so that people cannot steal that money, that we are accountable to Canadians.

These consultations provided valuable input and we are going to listen to Canadians, and do what they say in relation to that.

The national highway system of which we speak here had a review and recently it was undertaken to see whether that system was serving Canadians properly. As a result we discovered it was not under the Liberal government and we expanded it. It was expanded in 2005 and includes three distinct categories.

The Trans-Labrador Highway has been included in the northern and remote category of the national highway system, so it is included in that system, like Highway 63 north to Fort McMurray. Indeed, that highway must meet applicable program parameters and funding criteria.

The fiscal balance consultations have identified many competing priorities and pressures across all jurisdictions. We, after 13 years of neglect, are going to do something. That is why I am pleased that the Conservative government intends to honour its commitment to contribute \$50 million for the surfacing of the Trans-Labrador Highway.

We are awaiting at this stage a business case from the province in order to ensure that the project will provide results for Canadians and accountability for Canadians.

• (1815)

**Mr. Todd Russell:** Mr. Speaker, like most things from this government, I will believe it when I see it. If words could pave roads, we would be all driving nice vehicles right now, but we still have the gravel and some places are not even connected.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

The federal government had no problem, as I understand it, to put \$150 million into a road from Fort McMurray to Edmonton. What is taking the government so long? It made a promise, it made a commitment, and it has the money, so why have we not seen it roll out? When can we expect a deal? When can we expect a cheque to be delivered for the Trans-Labrador Highway?

**Mr. Brian Jean:** Mr. Speaker, apparently the member was not listening. We are awaiting a plan from the provincial government because we have promised taxpayers that we will be providing an accountable government. We will ensure that money is spent properly and not wasted, not stolen by people helping their friends.

We are there to help Canadians long term to provide a solution on a national highway system that will work.

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The motion to adjourn the House is deemed to have been adopted.

[*English*]

Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:16 p.m.)

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