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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, October 18, 2007

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, October 18, 2007

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1000)
[English]

TACKLING VIOLENT CRIME ACT

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-2, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE WHOLE

APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CHAIR AND ASSISTANT DEPUTY CHAIR

The Speaker: I am now prepared to propose for the ratification of the House a candidate for the position of Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole.

[Translation]

Pursuant to Standing Order 8, I propose Mr. Royal Galipeau for the position of Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole. The motion is deemed moved and seconded.

[English]

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

[Translation]

The Speaker: I am now prepared to propose for the ratification of the House a candidate for the position of Assistant Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole.

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 8, I propose Mr. Andrew Scheer for the position of Assistant Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole. The motion is deemed moved and seconded.

[Translation]

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

•(1005)
[English]

PETITIONS

IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to table this petition signed by my constituents. I am told that 31,000 people have signed the petition calling upon Parliament to halt the deportation of Laibar Singh due to his fragile health and to allow him to stay in Canada on humanitarian and compassionate grounds.

Mr. Singh is paralyzed by an aneurysm and has the support of many politicians of all political stripes and levels, 13 independent doctors, and over 50 organizations including: employees, unions, human rights groups and Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh religious organizations.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present this petition on behalf of thousands of my constituents. Mr. Laibar Singh is a disabled refugee claimant from the Punjab region of India and is facing deportation from Canada by this weekend. He has received tremendous support and compassion from my community in order to receive the medical care he now requires.

Given his fragile condition, these constituents ask that the Government of Canada grant Mr. Singh permanent residence in Canada on humanitarian and compassionate grounds.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

BILL C-357—EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT AND BILL C-362—OLD AGE SECURITY ACT

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 rise on a point of order with regard to two private members' bills, Bill C-357 and Bill C-362. Without commenting on their merits, I submit that these two bills require royal recommendations.

Points of Order

First, I want to explain why Bill C-357, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (Employment Insurance Account and premium rate setting), requires a royal recommendation.

As the Chair ruled on May 9, 2005:

—bills which involve new or additional spending for a distinct purpose must be recommended by the Crown. The royal recommendation is also required where a bill alters the appropriation of public revenue “under the circumstances, in the manner and for the purposes set out” in the bill. What this means is that a royal recommendation is required not only in the case where more money is being appropriated, but also in the case where the authorization to spend for a specific purpose is being significantly altered.

I would note that Bill C-357 is nearly identical to Bill C-280 in the 38th Parliament which the Speaker ruled required a royal recommendation.

On June 13, 2005, the Speaker stated:

—Bill C-280 infringes on the financial initiative of the Crown for three reasons: first, clause 2 effects an appropriation of public funds by its transfer of these funds from the consolidated revenue fund to an independent employment insurance account established outside the consolidated revenue fund.

Second, clause 2 significantly alters the duties of the EI Commission to enable new or different spending of public funds by the commission for a new purpose namely, the investment of public funds.

Third, as indicated in my ruling of February 8, clause 5 increases the number of commissioners from four to seventeen.

All three of these conditions apply to Bill C-357.

Clause 2 would create an employment insurance account that is outside the consolidated revenue fund. The bill would transfer money out of the consolidated revenue fund to the employment insurance account and that money would no longer be available for any appropriations Parliament may make. This would be an appropriation of funds and, therefore, requires a royal recommendation.

However, worthy some aspects of the bill may be, and some aspects of it are, this does not alter the need for the royal recommendation.

Clause 2 would also change the duties of the Employment Insurance Commission, including new requirements for the commission to deposit assets with a financial institution and to invest assets to achieve a maximum rate of return.

These are new and distinct purposes which have not been authorized and are additional reasons why clause 2 requires a royal recommendation.

Clause 5 of Bill C-357 would increase the number of commissioners on the Employment Insurance Commission from its current four to seventeen.

On February 8, 2005, the Speaker ruled that the appointment of 13 new commissioners to the Employment Insurance Commission in Bill C-280 required a royal recommendation. This is consistent with other rulings where the Speaker found that adding remunerated members to commissions requires a royal recommendation. Given these precedents, I submit that clause 5 requires a royal recommendation.

To sum up, Bill C-357 would require an appropriation, it would alter the purpose of funds covered by the act, and it would require

new spending for an expanded commission; therefore, it must be accompanied by a royal recommendation.

The second bill I want to draw to your attention is Bill C-362, An Act to amend the Old Age Security Act.

This bill would increase old age security and guaranteed income supplement benefits by lowering the threshold for eligibility from the current 10 years to 3. This change would result in significant new expenditures.

Under the Old Age Security Act, applicants must have at least 10 years of residence in Canada after age 18 in order to qualify for benefits.

I would further note that partial benefits are paid to applicants who have less than 10 years of residence if the applicant has credits from a country with which Canada has a pension agreement. Residence has been an eligibility criteria since this program's inception in 1952. Reducing the residence requirement from 10 years to 3 years would have significant costs.

Since eligibility for old age security pensions also qualifies for low income recipients to receive the guaranteed income supplement, the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development estimates that the total cost of reducing the qualifying period would be over \$700 million annually.

● (1010)

Precedents clearly establish that bills which create new expenditures for benefits by modifying eligibility criteria or changing the terms of a program require a royal recommendation.

On December 8, 2004, the Speaker ruled in the case of Bill C-278, which extended employment insurance benefits, that:

Inasmuch as section 54 of the Constitution, 1867, and Standing Order 79 prohibit the adoption of any bill appropriating public revenues without a royal recommendation, the same must apply to bills authorizing increased spending of public revenues. Bills mandating new or additional public spending must be seen as the equivalent of bills effecting an appropriation.

On November 6, 2006, the Speaker ruled with regard to Bill C-269, which extended employment insurance benefits, that:

Funds may only be appropriated by Parliament for purposes covered by a royal recommendation...New purposes must be accompanied by a new royal recommendation.

On November 9, 2006, the Speaker ruled in the case of Bill C-284, the bill that enlarged the scope of the student grants program beyond that originally authorized by Parliament, that:

Any extension of the terms of an existing program must be accompanied by a new royal recommendation.

On November 10, 2006, the Speaker ruled in the case of Bill C-278, dealing with employment insurance benefits, that:

—by amending the Employment Insurance Act to extend sickness benefits from 15 weeks to 50 weeks, the bill would require the expenditure of additional funds in a manner and for a purpose not currently authorized.

On March 23, 2007, the Speaker ruled in the case of Bill C-265, dealing with employment insurance benefits, that it was abundantly clear:

—those provisions of the bill which relate to increasing employment insurance benefits and easing the qualifications required to obtain them would require a royal recommendation.

I would also note that when Parliament adopted amendments to benefit criteria in the Old Age Security Act in Bill C-36 earlier this year, this legislation was accompanied by a royal recommendation.

In conclusion, Bill C-362 would increase expenditures for old age security and guaranteed income supplements in ways not already authorized and, therefore, should be accompanied by a royal recommendation.

[Translation]

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to what my colleague had to say.

First off, I would say that we do not agree with requiring a royal recommendation for the creation of an independent employment insurance account.

We should be given another opportunity to address this issue.

• (1015)

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would make two observations in response to the issues the government has just raised with respect to these two bills.

First, your precedents are very clear that the raising of the issue by the government with respect to royal recommendations does not, of course, prevent the normal debate from proceeding. The issue would have to be resolved before a final vote is taken, but obviously members are free to debate these items up until the time that you make your ruling.

Second, before that ruling is given, I am sure that you will want to provide the sponsors of the bills with an opportunity to address themselves to you.

The Speaker: Yes. That was exactly what I was going to say in respect of this issue. I am sure that all hon. members appreciate the thoroughness with which the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons has reviewed these bills and come up with arguments that he feels are important in respect of their procedural acceptability. Such diligence is something that the Chair, of course, always appreciates.

I will look forward to hearing comments now from, presumably, the proposers of the bills, the persons who put them forward, and possibly others on this issue. Then I will come back to the House with a decision in due course, but I would urge them to move quickly with their submissions on the procedural aspects so that a decision could be rendered before the bills come before the House for a vote at the third reading stage.

[Translation]

As the House leader correctly pointed out, bills are acceptable up until third reading, and it is at that point that the House cannot vote if royal recommendation for the bill is required by the Standing Orders.

That is the end of this discussion for the time being.

The Address

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

[English]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed from October 17 consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today and engage in the debate on the Speech from the Throne.

Today I rise wearing a number of hats. I am here today as the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development Canada. I am here as a member of Parliament for Medicine Hat. Also, when we talk about issues of crime and law and order, I think it is appropriate to mention that I am here as a husband and a father, because this is an issue that I think we all feel very acutely and personally.

It is a pleasure, though, to talk today about what was in the Speech from the Throne, first of all wearing my hat as the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development. Yesterday and in the Speech from the Throne read by the Governor General on Tuesday, the Prime Minister talked about the need for the country to finally and forever get serious about the issue of tackling crime and making our communities safer. I would argue that in order to do this an “all of government” approach is required.

I think the Prime Minister has signalled his intention to do exactly that. It was not very long ago in Winnipeg that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Health talked about a national anti-drug strategy designed to steer young people away from drugs but also to ensure that those people who are addicted get the help they need.

I feel that in my portfolio we do a number of things, and I am proud of this, that are designed especially to help young people so that they do not get drawn into a life of crime, which is an easy temptation in neighbourhoods that have broken down and where families are not stable. To that end, we provide a lot of programming aimed at helping youth and in fact targeting youth who in many cases are most likely to get drawn into that kind of situation. We do that through the youth employment strategy.

We have also launched a number of new and very important initiatives. I want to touch on them briefly. We have done things like announcing in the budget new labour market agreements which allow us to work with the provinces so that we reach out to all those individuals who are not eligible for employment insurance, such as people who have been on social assistance, and people who, for whatever reason, have not been able to get into the workforce and need a helping hand from the government. This is a very significant initiative of \$3 billion over the next six years. We believe this is an important way to reach out to people who left school early, for instance, and who have struggled to find work, and to give them the helping hand they need to get employment and avoid that life.

The Address

We have also announced an apprenticeship incentive grant, which we think will help 100,000 people a year get into the trades. We have doubled the size of the aboriginal skills employment program, which benefits aboriginals around the country, but certainly in the north. I point out that unfortunately we have very high levels of crime on reserve in many parts of the country and certainly north of 60. We have very high levels of violent crime, levels at nine times the national average, for instance, in places like Nunavut.

We believe these initiatives are extraordinarily important in terms of preventing crime and reaching out to people who are vulnerable and ultimately giving them some hope. As the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, I note that these are some of the new initiatives we have undertaken.

I want to highlight one other initiative that I think is important. I see a member of the opposition across the way with whom I discussed this the other day. This initiative is the homelessness partnering strategy, which is an initiative that we put in place a number of months ago. It is designed to work at a community level, whereby we have communities leading the charge in identifying how we can best help people who find themselves homeless, knowing that the best way to start to give them the help they need is to put a roof over their heads first and, even before that, to prevent homelessness.

• (1020)

We think this can best be done at the community level. This new initiative brings together the federal, provincial and municipal governments and certainly the not for profit organizations that on the ground are the real experts. I am proud of that initiative. I am looking forward to working with local groups to achieve some of the ends I have just discussed.

If I may, I will now change hats and, as a member of Parliament from the riding of Medicine Hat, talk about an issue that is vitally important to Canadians. I come from a rural riding not unlike those of many members in the House. It is a riding chiefly peopled by a lot of middle class Canadians who enjoy relative prosperity, but of course there is a range of incomes in the riding. Nevertheless, despite the fact that these people seem to have a pretty good situation in general, when I tour the riding and go to town hall meetings, as I did this fall, many people raise the issue of crime. They are deeply concerned about crime.

I always argue that I do not think there is a people in the world fairer than Canadians; they are fair to a fault. They believe in fairness. By extension, I believe they also feel very strongly that there must be justice in the country. I think very often they believe that we do not have a very just justice system in Canada today. I want to talk about that for a moment.

As I mentioned, I think we live in a pretty good part of the world, but when one talks to people, whether they are young people who very often themselves are the victims of youth crime, or older people who very often are afraid of the chaos they sometimes find on the streets of their communities in the form of property crime or very aggressive panhandling, or people who are worried about the rapid rise in drug use and ultimately the crime that springs from that, they are concerned.

When people see stories like the one we saw recently regarding a young constable murdered in Hay River, or when they see some of the terrible gun violence on the streets of Toronto at Jane and Finch, they are extraordinarily concerned. They wonder why we do not do more to provide police officers and crown prosecutors with the tools they need in order to bring this problem under control.

I would be extraordinarily remiss if I did not point out that as an opposition member of Parliament I certainly spoke on these issues a number of times over the years, but there are others in this place who have done far more than I to draw attention to this. I think about a couple of members of Parliament on our side who have announced that they will soon be leaving this place. They have announced their retirements. I think of my friend from Calgary Northeast, who chairs the justice committee, and my friend, the member of Parliament for Wild Rose. They both have spoken eloquently in this place for years about the need to provide precisely those tools to crown prosecutors, the RCMP and local police forces so they can do their jobs.

Our government has made this a priority since the time we came to power. We have brought forward a number of measures to attempt to address some of the issues raised by my constituents. In fact we have introduced in this place something like 13 different pieces of legislation dealing with the issues of criminal justice. The sad fact, though, is that unfortunately at almost every turn these initiatives have been thwarted by the opposition.

I have to say that I am simply required by honesty to point out that it is not the people one might suspect who are thwarting a lot these initiatives. Sometimes we have run into problems with the Bloc and the NDP in trying to get these things through, but I can say that overwhelmingly it is the Liberals who are standing in the way of delivering measures that will make Canadians safer. Unfortunately, they do this in one of the most sneaky and underhanded ways possible.

• (1025)

On the one hand, they stand up in this place and talk about the need to address these problems. Then, when the cameras are off, they go into committee, gut individual pieces of legislation and try to send them, hollow, back to this place. If these pieces of legislation do pass, they go to the Senate where the Liberals sit on them to the point where of course ultimately those bills do not go forward.

As a result, we are in a new Parliament. Now we are asking for the authority of this place to go ahead and pursue some of this legislation aggressively so we can do exactly what we told Canadians we would do, which is to bring in legislation and provide tools to the police and crown prosecutors so we can make our streets safe again.

There is not a member of Parliament in this place who is not touched by this every day. I get very frustrated in regard to this issue, because I do not think there is any more important role we have than that of ensuring the protection of the citizens of our country.

The Address

The throne speech speaks about this country's commitment to peace, order and good government. I can tell the House that I am never more proud as a member of Parliament than when we do something to protect the most vulnerable in this country. That is exactly what we will be doing if we start to address some of the issues laid out in the Speech from the Throne.

I could best do that by talking a little about some of the pieces of legislation we brought forward in the past that were stymied by the opposition, in particular by the Liberals, and then talk about the need to bring them forward again in a new bill, in the tackling violent crime initiative the Prime Minister spoke of yesterday.

One of the most important pieces of legislation we offered in the last Parliament was Bill C-10. Bill C-10 would provide a mandatory minimum sentence, a mandatory minimum penalty, for firearms offences. In other words, that means there would be a minimum amount of time that someone would have to serve if found guilty of committing a crime with a firearm. It would mean that judges would no longer have the latitude of allowing someone to walk away without serving any time at all. I think that is common sense to the great majority of Canadians.

Sadly, that was never observed in many, many cases. The result is that people ultimately completely lose confidence in the justice system in this country. They start to throw up their hands and say, "What is the point?" After a while, people even quit reporting crimes.

Our Bill C-10 was designed to address some of those concerns. That bill was stalled in committee for 252 days. The bill died after a total of 414 calendar days before Parliament. In other words, we brought that bill forward, the public was with us, and the opposition spoke in favour of these types of initiatives during the election campaign, but when the rubber met the road, when members of the opposition had a chance to do something to protect Canadians, they stood in front of us and blocked our way.

They should be ashamed of that, because there is not a member across the way who does not have people coming into his or her office every week and complaining about the crime they read about, hear about or experience. They want something done, but it never happens because members of the opposition stand in the way. They stood in the way of it when they were in government for 13 years. Now it is time to start to deal with it.

Another bill we brought forward was the reverse onus on bail for firearms offences, Bill C-35. It was stalled in committee for 64 days. The bill died after a total of 211 days before Parliament.

What does this mean? What does the bill do? The bill ensures that persons accused of a gun crime have to show why they should not be kept in jail while awaiting trial. That would apply to people who are accused of using a firearm to commit certain offences, including attempted murder or discharging a firearm with a criminal intent, sexual assault with a weapon, aggravated sexual assault, kidnapping, hostage taking, robbery, and extortion.

• (1030)

When those people are accused of those crimes, we are simply asking that they demonstrate why they should be allowed bail. The onus would be reversed. If we think about what is at stake, I do not

think that is too much to ask. What is at stake is the safety of ordinary men, women and children in this country who want nothing more than to go about their lives and pursue whatever it is that pleases them.

However, again we were stymied in our attempt to bring forward this common sense legislation that was supported by the Premier of Ontario and the mayor of Toronto, jurisdictions where all too often they see the results of laws that do not adequately address the problems of crime.

Another bill that we are anxious to bring forward is Bill C-27, which deals with the issue of dangerous offenders. This bill was stalled in committee for 105 days and it died after a total of 248 days before Parliament. The bill would create a presumption of dangerousness, so that when an individual has been convicted three or more times of violent sexual crimes, it would be up to that person to prove that he should not be regarded as a dangerous offender.

I honestly do not understand why the opposition would stand in the way of what is, in my mind, very common sense legislation. If we are committed to the ideal of peace, order and good government, we must back it up with legislation and resources. I would argue that the opposition has failed us on that count, irrespective of what it says during election campaigns when it is very popular to appear to be law and order parties.

Another bill that we brought forward dealt with the age of consent, the age of protection, which was tabled in Parliament on June 22, 2006. It was endorsed by the Kids' Internet Safety Alliance and the Canadian Crime Victim Foundation. It was stalled in committee for 175 days and died after a total of 365 days before Parliament. It sought to raise the age of consent from 14 to 16, which to me is such an obvious way to protect the most vulnerable people in our society, children, but again the opposition finds all kinds of odd and strange justifications for not pursuing this.

Where is the conviction that we have an obligation as legislators to protect vulnerable people in this society? This was, I would argue, a common sense initiative that again was thwarted by the opposition.

Finally, I want to talk about Bill C-32, drug impaired driving. It was introduced into the House on November 21, 2006 and referred to the justice committee in February 2007. Despite being endorsed by Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Bill C-32 died after 149 days in committee and the bill died after a total of 213 days before Parliament. The bill would have given the police the tools they need to better detect and investigate drug and alcohol impaired driving and penalties for impaired driving would have been increased. Persons suspected of being impaired by a drug would be required to submit to a roadside sobriety test and, if they failed, to provide a blood or urine sample to confirm whether they had consumed a drug.

I again would remind members how often we read in the newspapers, see on TV and have people come into our offices to talk about the terrible effects of the scourge of drug and alcohol impaired driving. However, when the opposition had an opportunity to help us deal with this and make Canadians safer, it failed us at every turn.

The Address

Today I am very proud to speak in favour of the initiatives outlined in the Speech from the Throne and to speak in favour of the justice minister, the public safety minister and the Prime Minister for their unwavering stance in favour of giving police and crown prosecutors more tools. I really do believe it is our duty and our obligation as legislators to ensure we do everything in our power to protect the most vulnerable people in our society.

• (1035)

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, following the Speech from the Throne, it is normal for various ministers to come forward and speak, especially the first minister following the Prime Minister, about measures their own department is taking. The Minister of Human Resources's department, of course, had cuts to literacy funding last year.

This country is facing a grave problem in terms of a skills shortage but we heard not a word about those fundamental and important challenges and about the cuts to literacy that the minister's government made in his department. The minister shows no interest whatsoever in these subjects.

Is the minister's problem that he wants to be the justice minister? Crime is certainly a concern to all of us and we are interested in passing good legislation that makes sense and smart legislation to combat crime but if he wants to be the minister of justice, why does he not resign as Minister of Human Resources?

From where has the minister's party adopted the practice of telling the big whopper? That party has talked a thousand times about 13 years, about the 13th anniversary and about the 1993 election. The Conservatives have been in government for nearly a year. The member knows full well that it was 12 years and two months.

What advantages does the member think his party has gained by telling this enormous untruth over and over again? Most of all, in their cynicism, from what part of the history of the world did the Conservatives adopt this practice of telling this untruth over and over again?

Hon. Monte Solberg: Mr. Speaker, if that is the extent of the criticism that the Liberals have to offer, I suggest they will be spending many more years in opposition.

Twelve years and two months probably seemed like a lot more than even 13 years to Canadians. I suggest that Canadians are very glad that those 12 years and 2 months are over. We have moved on to a new era where we are actually doing a few things.

I am duty bound to address a couple of the issues that the member raised. He talked about whether I am allowed to speak to issues dealing with criminal justice. I remind the member that I did say at the outset that all government approaches need to deal with these issues. I talked a bit about some of the important initiatives that we have set in motion, including important initiatives to ensure that we provide stability to families and give them jobs. I spoke about initiatives like the new labour market agreements which, I would remind my friend, have a large literacy component. I would point out to my friend that we are talking about \$3 billion over the next six years that will go toward ensuring people who have struggled to get into the workforce will get literacy and basic skills training, which is a lot more than any suggested cuts that my friend referred to. I point

out to him that according to the Canadian Council of Learning, the literacy program put in place by the previous government had no measurable effect on outcomes over the period between 1994 and 2004.

I guess the question is: If we are spending money and getting no measurable effect then what good is it? Why not take that money and put it into things that would make a difference in people's lives?

• (1040)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Mr. Speaker, often what makes a good speech is not only the points it touches on, but also those that are forgotten or left out. When we talk about the increase in crime, we are also talking about poverty.

I will therefore direct my question to the minister who just spoke. He is responsible for various issues, but I want to talk about just two: employment insurance and, specifically, a measure designed to add five weeks of EI benefits for a number of regions in Quebec. That would help people in extremely difficult situations. I know what I am talking about, because I come from Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine. I also know that many people there have very hard jobs that pay very little.

Take, for example, the people who work in tourism. They work in motels on compressed schedules, 15 to 20 hours a week, for minimum wage, so they earn 55 percent of a full salary. These people, who have families to look after, are automatically living in poverty. All these factors come into play in the situation the minister was describing.

Another factor involves young people and the summer career placement program. This government made a serious mistake. It admitted its error and went a little way toward fixing it, but the damage was done. The message that was sent to the people in my region and elsewhere is that this government does not care at all about unemployed workers living on the verge of poverty or about young people who would like to return to the area they came from. These young people could take the sort of job that would allow them to return to their region and possibly help an organization, as the minister mentioned in his presentation.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Raynald Blais: I know that some people may not be happy about what I am saying, but I want to wake them up to something that is going on all across Canada. We need to show some empathy toward people living in poverty. I would like the minister to respond.

[*English*]

Hon. Monte Solberg: Mr. Speaker, as I said during my speech, as a member of Parliament, and I suspect this is shared around the House, I feel proud as a member when we do something that helps the most vulnerable people in society.

The Address

I do not think we should discount the impact a strong economy has on producing jobs that do give people more options. In fact, we are now enjoying the lowest levels of unemployment in our history.

However, I am sensitive to the fact that in certain regions that has not occurred, which means that we must do something to help people in those areas. I am proud of the fact that my predecessor put in place the targeted initiative for older workers, which was supported by members of the Bloc Québécois, precisely to ensure that people in regions that have been hard hit by layoffs have options.

Today we have announced no less than nine different initiatives in Quebec to help give people the training they need because better paying jobs do require upgrading of skills. This will allow people to step into better jobs. We will provide \$2 billion a year through employment insurance which will be delivered by the provinces to ensure there is more training for people at the provincial level.

We put in place the new labour market agreements, which I referred to earlier, \$3 billion over six years, and the apprenticeship incentive grant. We have undertaken many different initiatives.

However, for those people who sometimes cannot use them, we have also enriched the EI benefits. We have also reduced premiums and we are open to other suggestions. We will do everything we can to ensure that people in all parts of this country with all its challenges have options to get back into the job market where possible and, where not, we will do what we can to ensure we can provide them with income support.

• (1045)

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to say to the minister that in his initial comments I heard him reach out and say that he wanted, as minister, to lead a study or an effort of a non-partisan nature to deal with the issue of the disparity gap and poverty in this country. It was good to see him actually admit that there are some vulnerable and at risk folks and families out there across Canada.

I am here this morning, given that the Liberals have put poverty out there as their number one priority, to ask him if he in his role would not lead the charge for a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy we brought forward in the House just a few months ago. I will be bringing it before the Standing Committee on Human Resources and Social Development. Will he support that? Will he get his members behind that so that we can bring all Canadians together around this question?

Hon. Monte Solberg: Mr. Speaker, when I met the member in my office a while ago we talked about this issue. I told him he should bring this before the committee. I suggested that members should finish the employability study in committee because that is absolutely tied to this whole issue. We are waiting for him to do that.

I said by all means to bring it forward. I would encourage our members on the committee to deal with it. The only thing I asked of him is that he take into account private sector measures like a roaring economy and labour training that could be used to deal with the issue of poverty which we are all concerned about.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to talk about this newest neo-republican manifesto, or as members across the way call it, the Speech from the

Throne. It is interesting that the front cover has a picture of a young boy waving a Canadian flag that is blurred and fading. It seems to me that is an apt analogy for the vague and blurred vision the Conservatives set out in the scant 16 pages that follow.

I was also intrigued, as no doubt many Canadians were, when I saw that the conclusion of this document was entitled "The North Star". We all know the Prime Minister is viewed as one of the minions of President Bush, but I did not realize until yesterday that their goal was to have us become the north star state as is now apparent. I guess that members of the Conservative caucus must figure that if we are going to adopt the Republican platform holus-bolus, they may as well go all the way.

I will try to ignore the heckling from the harping seals across the way, although I do hope they have received permission from the Prime Minister's Office. Otherwise they will be hauled on the carpet for acting in that way.

Regular Canadians across this country are concerned with the wrong-headed direction that regime is taking us in, by walking away from Kyoto and embarrassing us internationally in the process, by having no strategy whatsoever on child poverty and no real interest. There is a void in the Conservatives' document. When it comes to any hint of a plan to help our struggling manufacturing sector meet the challenges it faces, for instance parity on the dollar. And it is not just manufacturing; there is agriculture and certainly the fisheries as well. When fishermen are selling into the U.S. market, for example, they do much better clearly when our dollar is lower. When the dollar is worth over \$1 American, it creates problems and it has a big impact all over the country. There is no process or effort whatsoever from the government to address these issues.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, I forgot to mention that I am splitting my time with my hon. colleague from Kitchener—Waterloo. He will be pleased to hear that I am splitting my time with him.

I did hear that my former law classmate, Elizabeth May, the leader of the Green Party, thought this was a green throne speech in the sense that it embraces the concept of recycling. I have to agree with Elizabeth May, because this new agenda is nothing more than a thinly veiled, thinly disguised effort to recycle what are clearly a bunch of old ideas and failed policies the government has trotted out before. How bush league is that?

The Address

I know that people in Nova Scotia are disappointed, people like Carmelita Currie, a constituent of mine who took the time last month to handwrite a four page letter. Carmelita does not understand why a government sitting on a \$13 billion surplus is still meanspirited enough to cut programs that help people living in poverty; that it is still meanspirited enough to cut programs for people trying to learn to read and who need help with that; that it is still meanspirited enough to cut funding for community environmental volunteers; that it is still meanspirited enough to cut support for our students who continue to face a heavy financial burden.

She wonders why the Conservatives will not use the massive surpluses they inherited, and at one time used to be so critical of, to actually cut health care wait times like they promised. We have seen no real action on that. She wonders why the neo-conservatives felt the need to grow the surpluses even bigger by increasing the lowest income tax rate to 15.5% after the Liberal government had lowered it to 15%, thus harming the least able in our society to face these issues.

Why would a prime minister betray Nova Scotia by not keeping his promise to honour the Atlantic accord? Every Nova Scotian to whom I have spoken was surprised that there is not a single word in the Speech from the Throne about the so-called side deal that was cooked up in some back room and has still to see the light of day.

● (1050)

The one thing that is certain is that Nova Scotians know they cannot trust the Prime Minister. They know he betrayed them by killing the Atlantic accord, a deal that was signed by the former Liberal government and the former Hamm provincial government. What did we get in its place? A handful of magic beans and an assurance that our province will get less funding over at least the next decade. There is no signed text, no supporting documents, no memorandum of understanding, no accountability and no transparency. Some deal, some government, some Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister may be able to intimidate his cowering caucus into conspicuous silence, but the Nova Scotia media has not been fooled and will not be kept from telling the truth on this. Halifax *ChronicleHerald* columnist Jim Meek correctly noted that it took the new government a year and a bit to tear Hamm's accord to shreds. Mr. Meek went on to point out that in fact, the new pact may not be worth the paper it's not written on. He explained that even federal finance officials told him they had no background documents to release on the file. It is shameful.

In the Halifax *Daily News*, columnist David Rodenhiser asked how it could be considered an agreement when there isn't so much as a memorandum of understanding outlining what both sides have agreed to. Any other time governments reach an agreement of this sort involving money or responsibilities, the agreements are written down and all sides sign on the dotted line. Mr. Rodenhiser concluded that the Conservatives' empty promises and their petty, mean, vindictive treatment of the member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley do nothing but deepen cynicism in Nova Scotia toward the Prime Minister and his gang of lapdogs.

The defence minister's snarling reply to the same member during yesterday's question period was disgraceful. It is a bit rich for him to claim that my colleague, the hon. member for Cumberland—

Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, was not working in the interests of Nova Scotians. Imagine. How shameful. The minister even derided the hon. member's strong stand as a personal crusade.

That dog will not hunt. That cynicism will deepen when Nova Scotians and Canadians see that the government's neo-conservative manifesto, the throne speech, is devoid of any of the values and beliefs that really make Canada the greatest country on the planet.

Those people could be forgiven, those Nova Scotians and other Canadians, for looking at the youngster on the cover of the document and thinking that the Prime Minister too is waving farewell to Nova Scotia. Like the flag that the youngster is holding, the Prime Minister's vision for our country is indeed blurred and fading.

● (1055)

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with some interest to my colleague from Nova Scotia to his view of the world and his view of the accord.

I know that the member took part in the agreement in 2005 when the accord was ratified and I thank him for his work on that. It was finally ratified by the then Liberal government. The hon. member would also know, so I wonder why he and the member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley continue to mislead the Nova Scotia public on what is available and what is not available in the accord.

The member would know that the 2005 accord, as signed with every “i” dotted and every “r” crossed on the 2005 equalization agreement as promised by the Prime Minister, is one of the options available to Nova Scotia. He would also know, and he should tell the truth, that what he and the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley have espoused, which is the accord as it was signed in 2005 with 100% of the offshore available in the offset agreement moved forward on the new O'Brien or 10 province equalization formula, would be worth less money to the province of Nova Scotia, actually \$497 million less.

There is some confusion around this but to add to that confusion really is patently disrespectful and misleading as a parliamentarian.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague knows full well that I am not misleading the House at all on this matter. In fact, there is no written agreement now on the so-called side deal. It is really hard to tell what it is when there is nothing to look at. There is no signed document to examine. The government makes all kinds of claims about it, but even from its own claims it is clear there is less money for Nova Scotia over the next decade. Therefore, I do not know what the member is talking about.

The Address

I have to ask him this. When I look at comments in the past, for instance the Canadian Press story on April 2 this year, which referred to the Minister of National Defence, his colleague from Central Nova, he insisted the accord was not in jeopardy. He said, “The accord is still there, still in tact, except the addition that there is a new equalization formula”.

Was the defence minister misleading the House and Nova Scotians then or is he misleading the them now? He cannot have it both ways.

The member wants to claim that the accord was in tact in the budget last year. That is not the evidence. He cannot have it both ways. He cannot say that and say now the government has fixed the problem when it said there was no problem at the time.

On the budget, the member for Central Nova on March 22 said this in the House, “This fulfills and builds up the government's commitment to respect the offshore accord”. If that were the case, then why did he have to develop a side deal? Was he misleading the House then or is he misleading the House now?

• (1100)

The Speaker: I think the hon. member for Halifax West would want to be careful. I notice the questioner was careful to avoid the suggesting that any member misled the House. We know that does not happen. The public might be misled, but that is another issue.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North on a brief question.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is curious listening to the comments of the member for Halifax West. He said that the government could not have it both ways. It strikes me that this is rather like the pot calling the kettle black. How can the member account for his own party's position of criticizing the government on many issues and expressing opposition to the Speech from the Throne, yet clearly indicating that he and other colleagues are prepared to support the government?

When will the member and others in the Liberal Party make up their minds and decide on which side of the fence they are? Will they stand up and be counted or are will they continue to support the government of the day?

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Speaker, I am glad my hon. colleague asked this question because it raises the same question about the NDP. How can the NDP members have it both ways? How is it that they could, for example, abstain from the vote on softwood lumber in order to avoid an election? Was that not an important issue for Canada in their point of view? Perhaps they did not think it was a particularly important concern in spite of the fact that it concerned and affected so many communities across the country.

I know lumber mills and employees in my province and many across the country have been affected by that, but they ignore it.

Let us face it, I think Canadians have sent us here to do a job, to make Parliament work for as long as it can, to do our best and to be as reasonable as we can to try to work together.

I think it is true that the government is trying to act as if it has a majority. It has to start recognizing that it has to consult with other parties. It has to cooperate and try to develop a consensus and bring forward bills that can reflect and achieve consensus in the House.

Should we throw all that away? The member wants to have an election and that is very nice, but it strikes me that I do not know why she wants that when I saw in the latest polls that her party is actually down. Of course we have the fact that her party announced its decision before it even read the Speech from the Throne, so guess it is no surprise.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to address the Speech from the Throne. I will try to start out on a positive note and end on a positive note.

Let me start by congratulating my colleague from Yukon for his hard work on bringing some light to human rights abuses in Burma. I congratulate all members of the House for making Aung San Suu Kyi the third honorary Canadian citizen. That is something of which we can all be proud.

The second honorary Canadian citizenship was accorded to Nelson Mandela, who did so much to fight against apartheid. He dedicated his life to that fight. After a lengthy period of imprisonment, he started the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and made sure that South Africa could maintain civil society. I congratulate him on that.

The first person to be an honorary citizen was Raoul Wallenberg. He was a Swedish diplomat in Budapest in 1944. His role in fighting to save Jews in the Holocaust from the Nazis and the Arrow Cross is something that is to be admired by everyone. For the people of Canada to make him the first honorary Canadian citizen speaks well for our country. Unfortunately, Mr. Wallenberg died in a Soviet gulag.

I mentioned Budapest. That is the city of my birth. I was born in 1946 and my family came to this country 50 years ago. My father, who was a Jew, lived through the Holocaust. He lived through the brutal dictatorship of Joseph Stalin as well.

Along the way my family gained a very deep appreciation for human rights and civil liberties. One of the things for which I have a deep appreciation and have fought for in my parliamentary career and when our party was in government is human rights. The one document I take my guidance from is our Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I have been here 50 years, 25 years without the charter and 25 years with the charter. I am deeply disappointed that the throne speech and the actions of the government have not made any mention of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which is supposed to unite all of us under the law. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms is about that. It is very disappointing that there is no mention of it in the speech.

We are talking about citizenship. I hold in my hand a document, which is the report of the United Nations on the stateless. I am very disappointed to see Canada featured in this report because we have citizenship laws in our country that make people stateless.

The Speech from the Throne talks about honorary citizenship. It seems to me that when we have a Canadian veteran who fought for our country in the second world war, the birthright of his child should be recognized. That is not the case.

The Address

We have a Canadian veteran's son who is taking this case to the courts, Mr. Joe Taylor. His father fought for the liberty of our country and the government is taking him to court. It said it would take him all the way to the Supreme Court because he won a decision ordering the government to restore his citizenship.

●(1105)

An article was written in the international magazine, *The Economist*, which says "Lost in Kafkaland". It mentions a 70-year-old woman who has been kicked out of our country and denied citizenship because of archaic laws. I cannot underline strongly enough, for the importance of our reputation abroad, that we bring the our Citizenship Act in compliance with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This is 25th anniversary and it is time.

When the Prime Minister was in Australia, he said to the Australian parliament and the press, "I have Senate envy. You elect your senators". The Prime Minister should have had citizenship envy. Australia suffers from many of the same problems we do with citizenship in our country. It enacted its citizenship act on July 1, Canada Day. It is time for us to catch up. We do not belong in a report of the United Nations that lists countries that make people stateless.

The other issues I have, since I cannot be positive all the time, is Kyoto, from 10, from great, from hero to zero. Abandoning the Kelowna accord is inexcusable. The level of child poverty in our country is inexcusable.

I want to touch on some issues like the democratic deficit, which I fought to help eliminate or make better in the previous government. It is back in spades. Members of the Reform Party used to stand and say that they were here to speak for their constituents, and I was sold on that. I stand and speak for my constituents. Now they stand and speak for the government. That is not the role of a member of Parliament. That really has to change.

The promises of the government to bring in a new citizenship act have been abandoned. The promise of the government to never take away citizenship behind closed doors has been abandoned. They are broken promises.

I want to touch on another issue. The Prime Minister says that he wants a mandate from Parliament to do his programs, that he wants to govern as if he had a majority. I have news for the Prime Minister. A mandate for a majority comes from the citizens of our country through an election. It does not come from politicians.

I want to talk about broken promises. The Prime Minister, when he was opposition leader, came up with some good suggestions as to how to democratize Parliament, such as electing committee chairs. The first thing he did when he came into office was appoint the committee chairs.

I will touch on this issue about the neo-conservative crime fighting agenda. The government has said that it will bring crime rate down. The chiefs of police have said that to reduce crime, it will not be done with more prison guards or more police. It will be done through social development. The government is trying to make Canada as safe as the United States of America, the best laboratory to show that the neo-conservative approach does not work.

I said I would end on a positive note, and I will point to my community in the Waterloo region. The city of Waterloo is celebrating its 150th anniversary. The University of Waterloo is celebrating its 50th anniversary. Canada's Technology Triangle is celebrating its 20th anniversary. Communitech is celebrating its 10th anniversary. My community has something from which the government could take a great lesson.

●(1110)

Our prosperity in the new economy is based on investing in education. It is based on investing in research and development. I am proud to represent the riding that brought to this country the BlackBerry, a company that 14 years ago had 13 employees. Now it has over 5,000 employees and growing.

I will close with the spirit of the University of Waterloo. Waterloo does things differently. Innovation has always been encouraged and rewarded, not just in the research centres across campus, but in the classrooms and the studios, on stage and on the playing fields. Waterloo is not a traditional university. It does not ask why, it asks why not? Why not eliminate child poverty? Why not have a plan that includes Kyoto?

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to say to the member who spoke that he alluded to the fact that I, because I am on this side of the House, do not speak for my constituents. I would suggest to him that if he goes to Wild Rose and makes that statement he had better wear a hard hat because that simply is not true.

I want to get to crime and the topic that we started off with today. Specifically, the member talked so much about rights that come under the charter and the protection of people and all that. I would like to ask him if he can explain to me why in 1993, when I came here and my colleague from Calgary Northeast and we began right away on a project of doing things to create legislation to protect children from child pornography, sexual assaults and all the terrible things that were happening to kids, and we wanted to raise the age of consent back in those years, we had to fight with the previous government time and time again?

I sat on the justice committee and I saw what the Liberals and the Bloc did. I have to give credit to the NDP. They pretty well were fighting on the right side for the protection of children. This was a subject that was constantly brought before the House and was never accomplished. For 14 years child pornography was never addressed by the previous government.

Today, 14 years later, legislation regarding the age of consent and the kinds of laws that would protect our kids have been passed by the House. Those laws have arrived at the Senate and have sat there for months, simply because in the Senate there is a Liberal majority.

I ask the member, why are the Liberals objecting to passing legislation that would protect our kids in this country, such as stamping out child pornography and raising the age of consent?

The Address

•(1115)

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: Mr. Speaker, I remind the member that he was one of the ones who taught me how to stand up and speak for my constituents. I have not seen much of that lately coming from that member.

On the issue the member just raised, he and I sat on some committees relating to child pornography. I will say that it was the previous government that put in legislation on child sex tourism that would charge Canadian citizens abroad if they engaged in that activity. The proof is in the pudding, charges have been laid and the warrants are out, and as soon as that person is caught he will be extradited back to Canada to face justice.

Let me tell the member about crime prevention because this is something I know a little bit about. Prior to becoming a member of Parliament I was involved in crime prevention. I do know that when we spend a dollar on prevention we save \$7 on incarceration. I know it costs more money to put one person in jail for a year than what it costs to put a person through university with room and board for four years.

I know about one of the causes of crime and that we have to campaign against is bullying in the schools. This is one of the most important crime prevention tools that we can have.

I say to the member opposite that his Prime Minister is the poster child for a bully and that is something he should be addressing.

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the hon. member's comments in the House. What disturbed me is his reference to the government's anti-crime agenda, our efforts to make our communities and streets safer as being neo-conservative.

Yet had he listened to his own leader's comments, the response to the throne speech, his own leader referred to and claimed that he was supporting five of our six initiatives in our anti-crime legislation.

Is the hon. member accepting that in fact his own leader supports the so-called neo-conservative agenda of our government and yet he himself opposes it? He should bring some clarity to the question.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: Mr. Speaker, I would really love to engage in that debate.

Let me say to the member for Abbotsford that I have been to his community and there is a great injustice going on to many Mennonites who live in his community who are being denied citizenship unduly because their great-grandparents had religious weddings and not civil weddings, so we consider their kids to be born out of wedlock. I hope the member for Abbotsford will do something to fight that in his constituency.

In terms of the issue of crime, in our community we are tough on crime. I helped set up the Community Safety & Crime Prevention Council. That was one of the things I worked on, and we have the best one going in the country outside of Quebec. We have the chief of police, the crown attorneys, the social agencies, the school officials and the city officials working together to prevent crime.

I can tell members that this whole war on drugs that they want to ape from the United States of America is very harmful. What they

are going to end up doing is criminalizing hundreds of thousands of young Canadians for no more than smoking marijuana.

•(1120)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The time has expired.

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a former front line police officer and police chief, I know the challenges that are faced every day by the men and women in uniform who patrol our streets. I am proud to be part of a government that appreciates the vital role law enforcement plays and that is prepared to provide the resources and legislative tools needed to make our communities safe.

I would like to take a moment to pay tribute to Cst. Christopher John Worden, who died tragically on October 6 in the line of duty near Hay River in the Northwest Territories.

On behalf of the people of Oxford county, where his wife's family lives, I would like to share our deepest sympathies and pay tribute to the courage and dedication he showed in protecting Canadians.

There is no greater responsibility for a government than to defend the right of its citizens to safety and security. By tackling crime and strengthening the security of Canadians, the government is fulfilling its obligations and moving our country toward greater stability and prosperity. To achieve our overall goal of making Canada safer, we are committed to working on the legislative and program fronts, to provide resources to law enforcement, and to provide targeted support to victims and communities.

Despite the opposition efforts to stall the majority of our crime legislation, the government has been moving forward with investments that are making our streets safer. The Speech from the Throne is a continuation of what the government has so far accomplished for Canadians.

I would like to bring attention to a comment made today by the hon. member across the floor. He said that crime rates are falling. In fact, that is only partially true. The homicide rates in Canada fell, but other serious violent crimes have risen in the last few years. More important, perhaps, one in six homicides were gang-related, and that is a relatively newer phenomenon.

I would like to first discuss what we have so far achieved for Canadians. The government has a number of important achievements under its belt and our renewed focus on tackling crime and protecting communities will build on our successes.

The Address

To make our communities safer, we are committed to putting more police officers on the streets. The Speech from the Throne reaffirmed our commitment to provide resources to recruit 2,500 additional police officers on the streets. We are committed to ensuring that all Canadians live in safe and healthy communities. Canadians want effective solutions to the crime that plagues their communities.

We have also delivered on a campaign promise to begin to add 1,000 new RCMP personnel to focus on federal law enforcement priorities, such as border security, guns, corruption, drugs and organized crime.

To train these new officers, we have allocated \$37 million over two years for the RCMP to expand its national training academy, Depot, and to accommodate new officers and build capacity to train more officers in the future.

Furthermore, as part of our fight against organized crime, we committed \$9 million to the RCMP's integrated counterfeit enforcement teams, which play an integral role in safeguarding our economy.

These highly trained teams have been strategically located in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, where the highest percentage of counterfeit notes are passed and seized. They work closely with the Bank of Canada and local and international law enforcement agencies to uncover and take action against counterfeit operations. The teams are already producing results, having scored several seizures of hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of counterfeit banknotes.

Also, as part of our fight against organized crime, the Government of Canada, in partnership with the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, launched a new website called organizedcrime.ca. It will go a long way toward building public awareness of how organized crime affects our lives.

In budget 2007, we continued the important work of protecting Canadians with additional investments for law and order, as well as security.

Most notably, we committed almost \$64 million over two years to implement a new national anti-drug strategy. Nearly one-third, \$21.6 million, of this new funding will be dedicated to support increased law enforcement activities. We will specifically target illicit drug producers and traffickers as well as the organized crime elements behind them, including gangs.

● (1125)

Earlier this month, the Prime Minister unveiled the new anti-drug strategy. The Speech from the Throne clearly commits the government to implementing the strategy, which will give law enforcement agencies powers to take on those who produce and push drugs on our streets.

In addition to tougher laws, the government will provide targeted intervention to prevent drug related crime in communities and to support victims. The new strategy will inform youth and their parents of the dangers of drug use and attempt to dissuade youth from using drugs, offer help and treatment to those who use or are addicted to drugs, and punish those who prey on young people and

others by producing and selling drugs. Someone who sells or produces drugs will pay with jail time.

In keeping with our support for the police, we are working closely with the provinces, territories and law enforcement partners to ensure that officers have the tools they need to significantly reduce illegal drug production and distribution operations. This should help cut off the supply of illicit drugs produced in lucrative marijuana grow ops as well as synthetic drug operations such as methamphetamine laboratories.

We can ask any parent or grandparent, including me, and they will tell us that no resource is more precious than our children. Law enforcement agencies around the world are working more closely than ever in the area of preventing the sexual exploitation of children. They need protection from a vast array of predators and threats, whether they are walking along the streets of our communities or running down the blind alleys of the Internet. That is why budget 2007 allocated an additional \$6 million per year to enhance current activities aimed at protecting children from sexual exploitation and trafficking.

Some of this funding will be allocated to the completion of the Canadian Image Database of Exploited Children, which will help investigators identify victims and offenders depicted in child sexual abuse images. The Canadian database, which will be linked to the international one operated by Interpol, will ensure that Canadian investigators are effective and efficient in these important investigations.

A one time contribution of \$70,000 was also recently granted to Cybertip.ca, Canada's national tip line for Internet facilitated child sexual exploitation. Cybertip.ca works closely with law enforcement and is experiencing additional workload pressures resulting from the heightened awareness of Canadians, which is increasing the number of tips received from the public.

But all of these measures are not enough. That is why the measures to protect families and communities against crime, like those introduced in this morning's tackling violent crime bill, including the threat of sexual predators, are so important. These reforms will further strengthen Canada's child protection laws, which are among the most comprehensive in the world. This investment will help our law enforcement agencies to, among other things, field test new tools and technologies to be used in the work of protecting children.

Our first budget in 2006 committed \$1.4 billion over two years to secure Canada's borders and better protect Canadians in their homes and communities. The government has taken action to facilitate the smooth flow of legitimate trade and travel while securing our borders. We recognize that this is vital to our national economy and will help protect the safety of our local communities.

The Address

To that end, we are hiring 400 new permanent border officers to end dangerous “work alone” situations. In addition, we are training and equipping a total of 4,800 border officers with side arms. In fact, the first of these armed officers are now on the front lines. We intend to move forward as quickly as possible on this important initiative.

There is no greater responsibility for a government than to protect the rights of citizens to safety and security. In the last session of Parliament, the government introduced a suite of legislation to fulfill this solemn duty, but some of the most important provisions did not pass. Despite the resistance by the opposition to passing laws that will make our streets safer, we made significant financial investments in law enforcement and safe communities.

To complement these measures, the government will go further with a safer community strategy to deal with the critical intersection of drugs, youth and property crime. We will bring forward new initiatives to fight the abuse of older adults, as well as the emerging threat of identity theft.

With this package, the government has all the bases covered. On the one hand, it will pose tough new penalties on offenders. On the other, it will provide targeted support to communities and victims.

These are measures whose time has come. I encourage all hon. members in the House to acknowledge Canadians' right to safety by supporting the government's Speech from the Throne.

• (1130)

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the hon. member's comments. I honour him for his contribution to Canada as a former police officer.

Nobody has a hammerlock on public protection and the interest that we all have in reducing crime in our communities and across the country. Where we differ, perhaps, is in how we want to accomplish that goal.

My colleague from Mount Royal, in fact, if we want to talk about facts, actually was part and parcel of introducing the child sex offender registry and some of the toughest anti-porn laws in the entire world against children. He is an individual who has contributed mightily to public security.

We want to work with the government to enhance that, so I would ask my hon. colleague a couple of questions.

Why on earth would his government end the early learning head start program that the Liberal government put forward, a program asked for by the police, a program which ensures that children have their basic needs met and, in so doing, reduces youth crime by 60%?

My second question is in regard to drugs. Yes, drugs are a scourge in our country and we want to decrease drug use. Why on earth would his government attempt to challenge and try to eliminate the Insite supervised injection program in Vancouver and the NAOMI project, also in Vancouver? These are projects that have worked spectacularly well at reducing drug use among some of the toughest, most intractable drug users in Canada, at bringing these people into treatment, reducing crime, reducing harm, reducing public disturbances, saving the taxpayer money, and reducing demands on our health care system. It is a win-win situation for all concerned.

Will the member support the Insite supervised injection program for three more years? Will the government have a broader expansion of that program and the NAOMI narcotic replacement program for drug addicts in Vancouver and allow that to spread across Canada for those people who have a drug problem that should be treated as a medical problem, not a judicial problem?

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear that my colleague opposite supports our crime prevention initiatives and the crime bills that we are going to bring forward.

In the last session, the government provided a great deal of resources for families. That is where we believe the emphasis should be: on building strong families. At the same time, we have provided a great number of tax dollars to crime prevention initiatives across the country in each and every province.

If my hon. colleague looks at the whole package, I think he will see that we have done a great deal on crime prevention and strengthening families.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I noted the member's statements about the general decline in homicides against the increase in other crimes. Despite the fact that he made mention of this, there was absolutely nothing in the throne speech to address that very thing, that being crimes committed against women and the violence women are experiencing, with young women fleeing abusive partners, 500 aboriginal women missing from the streets of Canada and murdered, and immigrant and migrant workers.

All of these women face real violence and the reality of violence in their lives, yet there is nothing in this throne speech to address that violence. There is nothing about affordable housing. There is nothing about child care with an educational component. There is nothing about changes to employment insurance and maternity and paternal leave. These are the very things that would address the needs of women and would prevent the very crime that members of the government give lip service to.

I would like to ask the member why there was nothing to change the direction of Status of Women Canada, nothing to address the issues of women and nothing to prevent the violence the government seems to be so particularly concerned about.

• (1135)

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, obviously I share some of the hon. member's concerns. As I indicated, I was a police officer for 30 years. I spent a great deal of my time investigating criminal acts committed against various members of society. I was a member of organizations that supported the individuals of whom she speaks, so I understand that, but our laws are addressed to Canadians and they include those people.

The Address

That is the whole issue of our crime-fighting agenda. It is to protect all Canadians, not one segment as opposed to another but all Canadians. I think this particular package does that. I think it does provide protection for Canadians, and those same victims of whom she speaks are also members of our community who deserve to feel that they live in a strong and safe community.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for the great speech we heard this morning. With his 30 years of experience as a police officer and then a police chief, we certainly appreciate his perspective on this matter.

As I travelled around my constituency this summer, there were many times when the people in the riding of Crowfoot would ask if our government was still going to proceed with its priorities, because they understood that the Liberals and other opposition parties were doing everything they could to stifle and slow down the agenda for the mandate the government had as far as fighting crime and the other priorities that it laid down were concerned.

A number of speeches we have heard this morning mentioned exactly the process in which the Liberals took on the government, especially on crime fighting. It was a process of passing bills in the House, sending them to committee and absolutely gutting the legislation at committee. Then, if it got through committee, they allowed it to go to the Senate, which just sat on it, stalling the legislation and never letting it come back and receive royal assent. I am wondering if the hon. member could speak about one of those areas, which is the area of tackling violent crime. We have seen that process happen.

Another thing the Liberals did in order to show they were tough on violent crime was to strengthen the maximum sentences received by those convicted, but they would never address the minimum mandatory prison term. I wonder if he, as a police officer, would talk about that. On violent gun crimes specifically, the government intends to make sure there are mandatory minimum sentences.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, the member for Crowfoot obviously has a serious interest in all of these matters. He is absolutely right in that a great deal of this legislation, when it did eventually clear the House, ended up being stalled by the unelected Liberal majority in the Senate. It never got through the Senate to receive royal assent, which certainly has held up an agenda Canadians want to see brought forward.

The member is absolutely right. When we increase the mandatory sentences but there is no minimum, the courts tend to look at the lowest end of the spectrum. I certainly heard the same comments from people in our community about the revolving door of people being charged and convicted of very serious offences but getting back on the street and recommitting. Canadians from coast to coast have made it very clear to all of us that they want to see an end to this. They certainly want to see people who are prone to committing crimes do the time that is expected. That is exactly what this suite of crime bills will do after going through the House.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was happy to hear the member mention the drug strategy. I wonder if he could elaborate, particularly in the area of treatment. A number of people in my riding need treatment for drugs, as do people in all ridings, and they are constantly referring to the lack of facilities for drug treatment. I wonder if there is anything in the plan to deal with that.

• (1140)

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, if the member for Yukon had followed the release on the drug strategy, he would see that in fact there were provisions in the strategy for encouraging young people to not be involved in drugs, but also for detox facilities.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Saint-Jean.

I am very pleased today to speak to the amendment to the amendment moved by the Bloc Québécois. The purpose of this amendment is to make the Speech from the Throne acceptable to Quebec.

The Speech from the Throne that was presented to us does not meet the needs of Quebec in terms of its development, nor does it satisfy the five conditions put on the table by the Bloc Québécois to reflect what the nation of Quebec wants.

When I heard the Speech from the Throne for the first time and when I re-read it, the first thing that came to mind was that the people who were planning to run for the Conservative Party in Quebec must have decided to stay home.

The government announced its desire to extend the mission in Afghanistan by two years, until 2011. However, we know that this mission is floundering, that it is extremely militaristic and that it is not achieving the desired results. There is no balance between the efforts in international aid and the so-called diplomatic efforts. None of this corresponds to what Quebecers want.

As far as the environment is concerned, the Conservative government is going completely against what Quebecers want. Quebecers want the Kyoto protocol to be applied as soon as possible in order to give people a basic quality of life again and to stop the current deterioration of the planet.

There is a strong consensus on this in Quebec, but there is nothing about it in the Speech from the Throne. The Conservatives take it one step further by associating themselves with the handful of countries that do not acknowledge the Kyoto protocol. That is the second contradiction between the vision of the Conservatives and that of Quebecers, who want to move forward.

For my riding, what gets me the most is the lack of any real position on the forestry crisis. This issue affects all the regions in Quebec. We are still struggling to get the industry out of its slump so that it can face new situations. There is a general consensus in Quebec that the federal government needs to do something about this.

I heard the Premier of Quebec, Jean Charest, and the Minister of Natural Resources and Wildlife for Quebec, Claude Béchar, both Liberal federalists, hoping Ottawa will put in some money as soon as possible. That is the general consensus in Quebec: the federal government must do its part.

The Address

Yet, there is absolutely no indication in the throne speech that the federal government will do its part. It merely repeats the same old rhetoric heard in this House for the past year and a half, that is, business as usual. The Conservatives simply tell themselves that the economy is doing well, so we should let market forces prevail. However, on a daily basis, businesses are announcing that they are closing. Naturally, this has serious repercussions on employment and on the workers.

We would have expected the government to finally announce a real assistance program for older workers. I would like to repeat what I said yesterday to the Prime Minister, who has remained insensitive to this situation, as though he did not even know what was happening.

During consideration of the 2006 Speech from the Throne, the House adopted a Bloc Québécois amendment to implement an assistance program for older workers. The Conservatives decided to sleep on the idea. Later, when it was time for the budget, a committee was formed and was supposed to present a report in September. That committee's mandate was just extended until December and we still do not have an assistance program for older workers.

In the meantime, people who are 55, 56, 58 or 60 years old who have been laid off must rely on social assistance. Some have even become ill. Unfortunately, there have even been some cases of suicide in my riding. I find this situation unacceptable.

Last year, the government's financial statements showed a budgetary surplus of \$14 billion. That surplus was used to eliminate part of the debt. This year, according to expectations, the same amount will be applied against the debt on March 31, 2008. Meanwhile, people who have contributed to the progress of our society and who have supported their families over 25, 30 or 35 years are losing their jobs and we have not been able to find the means of enabling them to make the transition to their retirement.

To evaluate our society, we must not only evaluate how riches are created but also the way those riches are distributed.

On that score, the Conservatives clearly do not deserve a passing grade. Changes absolutely have to be made.

In the same line of thought, there is an employment insurance pilot project covering 21 regions of Canada that have high unemployment rates, especially in terms of seasonal employment. After a struggle lasting many years, we have succeeded in gaining an additional five weeks of employment insurance. However, that has not yet been incorporated into the act. It is only a pilot project.

• (1145)

In June 2006, for the first time, under the pressure of questions from the Bloc, the government agreed to an extension until December 2007. However, we have been forced to return to the offensive because the government has not done any of the evaluations that it said it would do.

On December 9, if the federal government does not decide to grant another extension, those people who are affected by the crisis in forestry and the manufacturing sector will fall back into the situation that existed a few years ago: the spring gap or "black hole,"

a period of several weeks in which there are no more employment insurance benefits or welfare payments; a time when people must draw money from RRSPs or find some other type of funding.

To digress for a moment, I listened to the speeches by the Conservatives this morning. If I lived in the country they were describing, I would be very unhappy. I hope that people do not live with that level of daily violence because that would be terrible. The reality is that there has been a decrease in crime in Quebec for several years. Yes, action needs to be taken and improvements are required. However, the state of crisis that the Conservatives are trying to create does not correspond to the reality, either in Quebec or the rest of Canada. It is proper that appropriate measures should be taken but to make this an obsession, as is being done now, makes no sense. That leads to contradictions like the following.

There was a federal program to assist young people in the regions who dropped out of school. In my region, a project of this kind had already been submitted. By the old criteria that applied under the Liberals, the project would have been approved. But the Conservatives changed the criteria and decided that it would now apply only where the crime rate was very high. So our region, which would have been entitled to an assistance program so that it could provide street workers, no longer qualifies, because it has a low crime rate. Nothing could be more absurd than this! Do we expect our young people to move to regions that have higher crime rates so they can qualify for this kind of measure?

All sorts of other things can be done, like prevention. We have to abandon this obsession and go back to doing things in a way that will let us give people an adequate income when they are working and when they are unemployed, so that they can meet their needs, support their families and pass on proper values to their families. Creating poverty, tolerating an ever-widening gulf between rich and poor in society, a gulf that the Conservative government encourages, those are the kinds of situations that lead to crime. This is unacceptable.

So Quebeckers really do not see themselves in this throne speech. I have referred to Afghanistan, the forestry crisis, the environment. There is also the federal spending power, on which the Conservative government has been swallowed up by the federal bureaucracy.

I was somewhat surprised by the Speech from the Throne. So I got out my notes. Some passages in the speech are exactly the same as what Mr. Chrétien said when he was Prime Minister. In fact, in those passages, we are told that we have to continue being centralist, and ensure that when the federal government establishes a program in an area under shared jurisdiction, the province does the same thing and does not adopt the same program as the federal government. This produces absurd results: in Quebec, we have developed a good child care system. But according to the throne speech, if the federal government decided to adopt a similar system for Canada as a whole, and if Quebec wanted to receive funds, it would have to institute a similar program, even though it already has one. The money it needs is not necessarily to create a child care system; it has other needs that have to be met. It has already met that need to a large extent and it has a system that is operating properly. This is another unacceptable measure.

The Address

This is not a sovereigntist position, it is the position of a Quebecker who respects the traditional vision of Quebec and has long been calling for the power of the federal government to spend in areas under Quebec's jurisdiction be eliminated. This is not my political opinion. Robert Bourassa, the former Premier of Quebec, stated it very well some years ago. This opinion existed before him, and it still exists today. That is why this throne speech, today, does not in any way reflect the will of the Quebec nation.

This is why the Bloc Québécois adopted, stated and clearly expressed its positions in advance. The Conservative government has decided to ignore those positions. Today, I challenge someone, someone who is not a Conservative candidate or hopes to be one, to stand before the voters in a riding in Quebec and say that he or she supports extending the war in Afghanistan by two years, and not honouring the Kyoto protocol. Anyone who does that is going to be looking at a perfect storm.

• (1150)

[English]

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the throne speech stated:

At the end of 2005, Canada's greenhouse gas emissions were 33 percent above the Kyoto commitment. It is now widely understood that, because of inaction on greenhouse gases over the last decade, Canada's emissions cannot be brought to the level required under the Kyoto Protocol within the compliance period, which begins on January 1, 2008, just 77 days from now.

Does the member agree or disagree with that?

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête: Mr. Speaker, my colleague's question is particularly insidious. He admits that the situation is intolerable and that we are headed for an ecological disaster, but the Conservatives think that since they cannot achieve the initial goals, they do not need to set any goals at all. They seem to be saying that they cannot be bothered. They do not seem to care that the quality of our environment has deteriorated to the point that major climate change is inevitable. It is as though they are asking us to give up the fight to change things.

The Conservative government and the Liberal governments that preceded it have a lot to answer for on this score, as do all members of our society. That being said, we do need clear goals.

Right now, the Conservative government is telling us that we should keep on polluting and that they will set targets eventually. According to the Conservatives, it does not matter if we increase production and aggravate problems related to climate change and greenhouse gases because we will just live with the new reality.

An unequivocal message has been sent to the Conservative government and every other government around the world: this has got to stop.

That is what Mr. Gore, who shared the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize with the IPCC, has concluded. If we want to ensure peace in the world in the near future, our priority should be to ensure the planet's viability.

The Conservative government is ignoring its responsibility and is not committing the resources needed to turn things around.

Quebeckers could not disagree more with the Conservative government on this issue.

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that the Bloc members will surprise anyone today when they say that they cannot support the Throne Speech presented this week. Several of my colleagues have referred to the five Bloc conditions. We were the first political party to establish what we were and were not willing to accept. That did not happen overnight. There were discussions in caucus. Our members are very involved in their ridings. When we meet with our citizens, we listen to their concerns, points of view, fears, what they like and what they don't like.

The five conditions established at the outset by the Bloc Québécois are rooted in the Quebec experience. They reflect what Quebeckers think. In our opinion, only one of these items may perhaps be acceptable, supply management in the agriculture sector. The government has said that it would continue to offer solid support in that area. As for the rest, it is a far cry from what the Bloc asked for.

Our planet is dying, but our Conservative colleagues say that the Kyoto goals and targets cannot be met. I understand; there has been no movement for years. We said we would sign the Kyoto protocol and that we would meet the targets; but now, 80 days or 3 months from the deadline, we are saying that we cannot do it. That is obvious; but did we try to meet the targets? Not only did we fail to reach the targets but we did so intentionally.

The Prime Minister attends international conferences where he associates with the greatest environmental delinquents on the planet, the United States, Australia and others. There he says that we will not meet the Kyoto targets and that we will do something else. The voters are not stupid. They understand very well that this position in Canada protects economic interests, particularly the oil interests in western Canada. This is done at the expense of the environment and is not in keeping with the intentions of citizens elsewhere in Canada. The government will certainly pay the price.

This is also the case for the forestry industry, which is experiencing a major crisis. The government is not lifting a finger to help. All manner of measures could be implemented, such as the reform of employment insurance or the re-establishment of assistance programs for older workers. The government could not care less and continues to defend major corporations, mainly the oil companies.

There is also the matter of federal spending power. This government has always said that it would stop interfering in areas under provincial jurisdiction. That is not what we are hearing today. It will be business as usual for old programs, and the government says that it wants to monitor new programs. It is still interfering. Federal spending power has not changed. We cannot accept that.

The last point I want to discuss in greater detail relates to my own area of expertise: Afghanistan. I think we should review the Bloc Québécois' track record of responsible action since Canada first went into Afghanistan.

The Address

I would like to go back to October 2001, when the Bloc Québécois said that the mission appeared to strike a balance between defence and development. We were told all about development, about how little girls would be able to go back to school, about how clinics, wells and irrigation systems would be built. We agreed to the mission because it was sanctioned by the UN and because NATO supported it on the basis of article five, which states that that an armed attack against one member of the alliance shall be considered an attack against them all. We agreed with this, so we agreed to deploying troops in Afghanistan.

Then, in February 2002, ground troops were sent in and things got more complicated. Initially, there were no ground troops involved. We sent boats and planes in on reconnaissance missions. We were less involved. Sending in ground troops meant more money spent and more soldiers' lives lost. That was when we started setting some limits.

In November, a major decision was made to leave Kabul, the capital—which Canada and its allies had managed to stabilize—and go to Kandahar. That was when we realized that there would be a very high price to pay. Still, we supported the troops, but we also started asking questions about detainees and speaking out against anti-personnel landmines and so on. We agreed to sending our troops to Kandahar in November 2005. However, as things went on, we realized that the mission was becoming unbalanced; it was leaning heavily toward combat and away from reconstruction and diplomacy.

• (1155)

At that point, we began to set limits. The Bloc Québécois introduced a motion on May 16, 2007 echoing what the Conservatives had said when they were in opposition. For example, how long would the mission last? Could the government tell us? What was the state of the personnel and materiel? We wanted to know the relationship between combat operations and humanitarian activities, reconstruction and diplomacy. What assessment criteria would be used to develop an exit strategy? Could we have those assessment criteria?

The day after this motion was introduced at the Standing Committee on National Defence, the government introduced its own motion to extend the mission to 2009 and asked us to sign a blank cheque. There had been barely a day of debate, and the government had not yet answered our questions. There was no answer to any of the questions I just mentioned. Nevertheless, we were told to close our eyes and jump from a tiny platform without knowing where we would land.

Given the circumstances, the Bloc Québécois said no to extending the mission. It is important to remember this. Where are we at today? The mission is still completely unbalanced. When I went to Kandahar, I attended briefing sessions where I asked how many Canadian soldiers were in Kandahar. I was told there were 2,500. I asked how many people were working for Foreign Affairs, engaging in diplomacy and holding talks with the state governors, the Afghan provinces and the municipal authorities in the villages. I was told there were six people.

CIDA is doing the development work, digging wells and building clinics and schools. And how many people does this agency have to

evaluate projects? Six as well. At that point we had really had it and our patience was at an end, because for months we had been asking this government to reverse this trend.

Now, what have we learned from the throne speech? We have learned that not only does the government not want to end combat operations in 2009, it wants to extend them. The government also uses the Afghanistan mission to justify its recent purchase of more than \$20 billion in military equipment and indicates that more spending is planned.

We believe it is unacceptable to invest billions of dollars of taxpayers' money in military equipment in order to extend the conflict. We are going in the completely wrong direction, and I am not the only one who thinks so. When I went to Kandahar, I met the top general, General Richards, who told me—and the delegation—that we could not achieve our goal through military force alone. Just like the Americans and Mr. Bush, this government is more interested in a militarization of the conflict, and we know that that gets us nowhere.

The Bloc Québécois is not very happy with the throne speech, in particular the military aspect of the mission in Afghanistan. When I see this government in action, I see that it has completely departed from the foreign policy Canada has developed over the past 50 years, during which Canada has had a good reputation. If we had to go to war, we went. If Canada wanted to go to war, it went.

Canada has participated in two world wars and the Korean War, but in those days it was known as a great mediator. This is no longer the case. Now, it is all about the military. The Canadian dove has decided to perch alongside the American hawk. This is terrible and will have tragic consequences. This battle cannot be won by military force alone. The government did not understand, it did not meet our condition on Afghanistan, and that is why we will vote against the Speech from the Throne this evening, next week and at the final vote.

• (1200)

[English]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his speech. I have worked with the member on committee and I quite appreciate his work. He is an excellent committee member.

However, I am a bit disappointed in his lack of knowledge on the environmental file because I thought his party was particularly keen on that. Maybe he was overexuberant in his partisanship but to say that nothing has been done really shows he lacks knowledge if he is not aware of the green plan and all the programs. He should know that environmental groups have suggested the reinstatement of over 100 Liberal programs that have been cut since the green plan. Some programs have been reinstated with less money and more stringent regulations so they are not effective.

The Address

There was work on wind energy, carbon sequestration, clean coal, renewable energies, biomass and partnerships with the provinces. All sorts of things have been done by many Quebecers working as scientists for the federal government under the direction of the government.

My question is not related to that at all. My question is related to the suggestion by the Prime Minister and the government that bills will be forced through committees. The committees do excellent work and all members do excellent work on committees but government members will be saying no to amendments and then rush the bills through committee. Does the member think that is democratic? Does that give respect to Parliament and to the committees?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my Liberal colleague for his two questions. As an aside before answering the question on parliamentary democracy, I would like to say that it was in fact the Liberal Party that signed on to the Kyoto protocol and its objectives. The then Liberal government signed an agreement that recommended a progressive decrease of greenhouse gases. At the end of their mandate, we ended up with a substantial increase in greenhouse gases. That party is just as responsible for what is happening to the environment.

As far as democracy is concerned, my colleague is right. This Prime Minister constantly says that it is important to give a voice to parliamentarians, the publicly elected members. And yet the first thing he does, on the issue of Afghanistan for example, is hand the whole thing over to a panel, by using Liberal gimmicks, since the former Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Manley, is now chairing this working group. I think it is a gimmick in an attempt to trick the political parties. He should have handed this over to parliamentarians. That is what we are here for. We are here to assess the situation, but we are not being given the opportunity to do so.

What is more, there are many other situations in which the Prime Minister is going back on his word to give more power to parliamentarians than to lobby groups.

My colleague is right. This Prime Minister is renouncing parliamentary democracy.

● (1205)

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in today's debate on the Speech from the Throne, a speech that directly addresses Canadians from coast to coast and issues that are very important to us all. One of those issues is safety on the streets and in the communities—the lifestyle that has defined us as a people and as a country for many years.

[*English*]

I would like to focus my remarks today on building a stronger, safer and better Canada.

Since becoming Minister of Justice and Attorney General I have had the opportunity to talk with Canadians from all walks of life, concerned citizens, parents, community activists, police, lawyers, and representatives from non-governmental organizations, about their concerns about crime and how we can better protect our

families, our communities and our way of life. I have been impressed by just how much is going on at the community level to address this issue and by the efforts of so many individuals and groups to safeguard their communities, but still more is required.

Canadians are clearly looking for us to demonstrate leadership through concrete action to tackle crime in this country. I am pleased to say that the government has listened. We understand and share this concern. This is why from the very outset tackling crime has been a priority for this government and we have delivered on this priority.

In the last session we came forward with an aggressive criminal law reform agenda that included 12 crime bills. At the time of prorogation, six of those bills had already been passed.

Bill C-19 created a new offence that specifically targeted street racing. I can say that this is very much welcomed in many communities across Canada. This new offence of street racing calls it for what it is, a reckless and dangerous act that too often claims innocent lives. Under this new offence, those who treat our public streets as a racetrack will be dealt with more seriously. This legislation has support right across this country.

Bill C-9 amended the Criminal Code to prevent those convicted of certain serious crimes from receiving conditional sentences, or what is sometimes known as house arrest. Under this law, which will come into force in a little over a month, our message is clear. Those who commit serious violent crimes will serve their time behind bars and not in the comfort of their homes. I cannot really leave this subject without mentioning that members of the official opposition gutted a major part of this bill at committee. That was very disappointing to me.

An hon. member: They should be ashamed.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, one of my colleagues says that the official opposition should be ashamed, and those members should be. Nonetheless, we proceeded with the other half of the bill because we believed it was a step in the right direction.

Other bills did not make similar progress. Two were still before the House of Commons and five of them were before the Senate. All of those bills were tough on crime. They were tough on criminals and sought to hold them accountable for their criminal behaviour by making their punishment reflect the severity of the crime.

Those bills would have had meaningful changes. They would have better protected youth against adult sexual predators by raising the age of consent for sexual activity from 14 to 16 years of age. This is something that is long overdue in this country. That bill did not get passed before the end of the session. When I was asked about this in my hometown, I told my constituents the truth. Because that bill did not get through the Senate, Canadian children would not be as well protected as they should have been. They should have been better protected this summer by having that bill passed.

The Address

We also had legislation that would have imposed mandatory jail time on those convicted of committing serious crimes with a gun. This too received a rough ride from members of the official opposition. I see the hon. member for Yukon. When that bill finally passed the House of Commons after we, with some support from the New Democratic Party, reintroduced most of the measures back into it, he will remember that five members of his own party could not put up with what the Liberals did, which was to oppose that legislation. About five of them supported it. They said that whatever else the Liberal Party was trying to do on the legislation, they were going to vote with the government. I appreciate that. Since that will be part of the new tackling crime bill that we presented to Parliament this morning, I hope to have their support.

• (1210)

In addition, we had a bill that would put the onus on an accused charged with a number of serious offences involving firearms to demonstrate why he or she should be released before trial. This has received widespread support putting the onus on the individual to explain why he or she should be out on bail.

I have heard very good things from people across the country. I have had a number of police officers tell me that it would send out the right message.

The wrong message gets sent out when an individual finds he or she is the victim of someone in a gun crime and the person alleged to have perpetrated that crime is back out on the street within a day or so. It is a problem for the victim and for the witnesses. It sends out the exact wrong message to the neighbourhood in terms of people's ultimate protection.

Nonetheless, these bills were important and they are important to the government. They would have better protected our communities against dangerous and repeat violent offenders. They would have made a real difference and a difference which Canadians have welcomed and quite frankly deserve.

There is support across the country for what we are trying to do. For example, the 2007 national justice survey that my department just released revealed that public confidence in the Canadian justice system is relatively low, especially when compared to other public systems, such as the health or education systems.

I was pleased to see this quite frankly. The survey found that two-thirds of Canadians support our government's approach to improve the criminal justice system. They support increasing police presence. They support strengthening laws. They support trying to prevent youth involvement with drugs and gangs. They support tougher penalties for serious drug offenders. They are supportive of the government's efforts with respect to drug treatment and prevention programs. I was very pleased to see that. Quite frankly, in terms of my discussions with Canadians this past summer, it does not come as a surprise.

When it comes to sentencing laws, the central concern expressed was that Canadians do not think the sentences imposed, either the type or duration of the sentences, are always appropriate. They identified that the three most important goals of sentencing should be to repair the harm caused by the crime, to hold the offender accountable, and to rehabilitate the offender to prevent him

or her from reoffending. In other words, these findings confirm that this government and our criminal law reform agenda are on the right track.

Can the members of the official opposition say that about their efforts such as they are to fight crime? Are they on the right track? I do not think so. I am certainly confident that we are on that right track.

Let me move on to the next steps in our continuing commitment to tackle violent crime. This is what we will be doing in the coming months. With the Speech from the Throne we are reaffirming our unwavering commitment to safeguard Canadians. We will do this through yet another ambitious criminal justice agenda. We will resume where we left off with our criminal law reform packages. I made mention already of the bill that I tabled in Parliament this morning. That bill, the tackling violent crime act, brings together in one bill the five bills that were still before the House of Commons and the Senate at the time of prorogation.

These bills include many of the proposed reforms that were debated in the previous session and that were supported and passed in general by most of the members of the House. It also draws from the debate to more effectively and comprehensively address concerns expressed in the House and by my provincial and territorial colleagues about the adequacy of reforms to address dangerous and repeat violent offenders.

To sum up, on that particular bill, for four of the bills it is as they were amended and passed by the House of Commons. They are back in there. With respect to dangerous offenders, we added provisions that were requested by provincial attorneys general. Concerns had been raised about clarifying some of the procedures with respect to a dangerous offender who receives sentencing as a long term offender and then subsequently reoffends. It clarifies that. I think it is all a step in the right direction.

• (1215)

I am looking to the opposition members for their support. The Leader of the Opposition rediscovered the fighting crime agenda yesterday. I am pleased. It has taken a long time, and I certainly did not address it during the summer, but if it means he will support us, then better late than never.

When I was in Montreal a couple of weeks ago, I indicated that we will be bringing forward criminal law reforms to address identity theft. This is one of the fastest growing crimes in Canada. It is estimated by the Canadian Council of Better Business Bureaus that it costs Canadians and consumers approximately \$2 billion a year. We know this will get worse unless we fill in the gaps that presently exist within the Criminal Code.

These new reforms will build on the existing fraud, personation and credit card offences and forgery and will target the preparatory work to these offences, including the obtaining, possessing and trafficking in identity information with intent, knowledge or recklessness that this information would be used to commit one or the other offences.

The Address

We have found with the existing legislation that usually, and many times organized crime is involved, the individual who is actually using the forged credit card or using information for an illegal purpose is caught at the end of the process, but the individuals who have been compiling that information from various sources and trafficking in it are not caught by the Criminal Code. We aim to change that.

We will also come forward with a comprehensive approach to address Canadians' concerns about youth crime in this country. As I went across the country this past summer, without exception, somebody or more than one person in the know raised with me the question of the Youth Criminal Justice Act. I told them very clearly that we intend to make improvements to the Youth Criminal Justice Act and we will act on some of the problems that have been brought to our attention.

One of them was in the Nunn commission report in Nova Scotia. That addressed, among other things, the question of pretrial detention. I indicated to the Attorney General of Nova Scotia and to my colleagues in the government caucus who are concerned about that issue as well as other issues, that we will be bringing forward clarification on that and we will be proceeding to Parliament. We will expand the basis and the criteria upon which a judge can sentence a young offender. We will come forward with all of those reforms and again, I think they will receive widespread support.

Those reforms will come forward, but we will not end our efforts there. A comprehensive review of the Youth Criminal Justice Act is in order. It has been five years since that piece of legislation passed. Incidentally, this is the 100th anniversary of a separate youth criminal justice system in Canada. Some members may not know that this is the 100th anniversary of that. I cannot think of a more appropriate time to launch a comprehensive review of that system.

With respect to some of the provisions in the Youth Criminal Justice Act that deal with presumptive adult sentences, we were in the Supreme Court of Canada last week defending those existing provisions. I am certainly looking forward to the outcome of that.

Again, I want to emphasize that this government believes in preventing youth crime in the first place. Not only does prevention promote community safety and reduce the number of victims, it may help a troubled youth on his or her way.

Teachers, police, service providers, parents and neighbours across this country go to great lengths to help youth. Their efforts are commendable. Some communities, such as aboriginal communities or gang plagued neighbourhoods, face particular challenges. This government will not back away from those challenges. We will continue to invest in efforts to prevent youth gun, gang and drug crimes, including through the youth gang prevention fund at the National Crime Prevention Centre, and the youth justice fund at the Department of Justice. We will mobilize community support, determine effective approaches and share that information with other communities with similar problems.

• (1220)

Drug use and drug crime are complex safety and public health issues with local, national and international dimensions. They affect all Canadians in many ways and on a daily basis, including: when

they read and hear about grow operations and crystal methamphetamine labs being discovered on their street or in their neighbourhood; as parents who worry about drugs in their children's schools; and as victims of property crime committed by drug users to feed their habits.

Tackling complex crimes like drug crime and drug use requires a targeted response that sets clear priorities and objectives, and this is exactly what the government has delivered.

On October 4, the Prime Minister of Canada announced the national anti-drug strategy. It covers a number of things. One of them is to prevent drug use, to treat drug dependency and to tackle drug production and distribution. The strategy will be implemented in the coming months and provides for an additional \$63.8 million over the next two years to prevent illegal drug use by young people, treat people with drug addictions and fight illegal drug crime.

The prevention action plan will focus on equipping youth, as well as parents, educators, law enforcement and communities with information and tools to help them make informed choices, identify emerging problems and to intervene to prevent illicit drug use before it happens. A major component of this action plan will be the launch of a marketing and mass media campaign to discourage young people from using drugs.

The treatment action plan supports innovative and effective approaches to treating and rehabilitating individuals who pose a risk to themselves and to the community. The action plan focuses on first nations and Inuit people as well as at risk populations such as youth. It will promote collaboration with the provinces and territories to support drug treatment services for youth where critical gaps exist, provide treatment programs for youth offenders with drug problems and enable the RCMP to develop new tools for referring youth at risk to treatment programs.

To compliment the drug prevention and treatment efforts, the enforcement action plan bolsters law enforcement efforts and the capacity to effectively battle things like marijuana grow ops, synthetic drug production and distribution operations. In addition to enhancing enforcement capabilities, this action plan will impose new criminal sanctions.

When this was first announced, I was asked if I was expecting any opposition to it. I said that there was some opposition. The people in the grow op business and in the production of these drugs will not like it. They will have a very clear message.

This is just part of what we are trying to do. Yesterday in question period my colleagues asked me when we would come forward with these things. As I always tell them, we are just getting started.

The Address

●(1225)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for a very clear outline of his plans.

First, about half a year ago the minister was researching a local issue for me related to names of chief justices in the territories. Is there any progress on that?

My second question relates to law reform, court challenges and legal aid. The minister talked for 20 minutes about his interest in improving the legal justice system. As a lawyer, I am sure he knows some of the very good work done by the Law Reform Commission of Canada in improvements to the justice system. Two of our first nations were working on excellent projects with the commission at the time funding was stopped.

Also, as a lawyer, I am sure the minister believes in rights and the court challenges program, which was established to help people who otherwise could not afford the huge expenses of fighting for their constitutionally protected rights. It also has some very great success stories of which he would be aware.

Legal aid is an excellent initiative, but there are a number of types of cases and people who do not have access to it yet.

Does the minister support bringing back these initiatives? I know he has supported legal aid in the past. Is he trying, for next year and the year after, to get increases for that valuable service?

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the hon. member's initial question about the renaming or re-designating of justices within the territories, I am still reviewing that matter.

When the hon. member began his question he talked about legal aid and then came back to it. Certainly I support the legal aid process. The legal aid process in Ontario is administered by the province of Ontario and for the most part is funded at the provincial level. However, that does not mean there is not a role for the federal government.

I was quite pleased that in the last budget there was stable based funding for legal aid, money that could counted on for an extended period of time. It is good because it fulfills a role. Many people otherwise would not get legal representation, but for legal aid.

As part of my practice, I did a number of legal aid cases in the early eighties. We were not paid enough for it, but nonetheless at that time lawyers did it almost as a pro bono exercise to ensure individuals received the legal representation they needed.

There have been improvements to the legal aid system since those days in the earlier 1980s and I continue to support them. As I say, when the budget was presented by my colleague, the Minister of Finance, earlier this year in the House, I was pleased about the part with respect to stable funding for legal aid.

With respect to any future allocations for it, that would be part of the budgetary process to be taken into consideration by the Minister of Finance and it would not exactly be in my bailiwick.

I understand and appreciate the comments and the suggestions of the hon. member.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one aspect of the bills that I fully supported was the age of consent from 14 to 16. That bill was sitting in the Senate. Correct me if I am wrong, but I believe that bill will now be in the new bill that has been presented. I wonder if the minister threw the baby out with the bathwater. If that aspect of the bill is left alone and remains in the Senate, there is a high probability that we could get that passed extremely quickly, for which many of my constituents have asked.

Another question I have for the minister is this. There seems to be a major reluctance from the previous government and the current government to deal with the issue of Internet pornography. I have had a bill in the House for almost 10 years. The premise to the bill is to hold those who have those service sites partially responsible for monitoring their sites to ensure that whoever accesses the sites are doing it accordingly.

Unfortunately, there seems to be a reluctance, and I do not know whether it is in government or in the bureaucracy, to seriously deal with what I consider one of the most major, vile crimes on this planet, Internet pornography and the luring of unsuspecting children into the evils of pedophilia, et cetera. Would the minister comment on that?

My final comment is this. We had a recent showing of the Calgary police force in Halifax trying to recruit Atlantic Canadians. The problem is that the RCMP and civic police forces across the country are having a major problem with recruitment. If we are going to, which we appreciate, be toughening up crimes and lengthening sentences, that means the provinces are going to have to outlay a tremendous amount of additional cash not just for extra correctional officers but for longer business days as well. That requires a tremendous investment.

Will the appropriate funding to the provinces be in accordance with the new tougher measures the minister is proposing? Will he address the issue of Internet pornography? Why would he have included the age of consent bill in the omnibus bill?

●(1230)

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, I have included the age of consent provisions in this bill because I want to get them passed. I guess that is the whole point of what is going on here. It is easy enough to say that it probably would have been passed at some point in the process. The fact is it was not passed. As I said to my colleagues, Canadian youth were not as well protected this summer as they should have been by the passage of that.

In his comments with respect to provincial enforcement and police officers, the hon. member said that they all appreciated toughening up the laws, and that is good. I want their support on that. This is exactly what we are trying to do across a whole host of provisions in the bill. If the New Democratic Party supports us on this, I welcome that.

The Address

I was very fair about this when I talked about Bill C-10, which is the bill that would give mandatory prison terms for people who committed serious firearms offences. I said that the NDP cooperated with us to getting most of them into the bill. That was in stark contrast to the Bloc and to the Liberals.

This is the day to day nuts and bolts of getting these things through. Forget the comments that members might have heard from the Liberals in the last election. As we saw, the Liberals did not support that legislation. However, to their credit, I think five or six members of the Liberal Party, who could not stomach the position that their party was taking in opposing mandatory prison terms for people who committed serious firearms offences, supported the government, and we could check the record on that. I appreciate his suggestion that they will help on this measure.

I am sure he has read the Speech from the Throne provisions with respect to extra policing, which is the responsibility of my colleague, the Minister of Public Safety.

I look for the support of all members to get this legislation through. All Canadians want it. All Canadians deserve that kind of protection.

Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the minister for taking a big step toward going back to a balance between criminals and victims. No Canadian would argue that we have gone way over the balance when a person in my riding gets hacked to death on the street and the killer gets 90 days house arrest, which is ridiculous, or when a woman is violently offended and the offender is allowed to move into an apartment just up the street to continue to mentally offend her again.

A number of these bills have been watered—

• (1235)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): The hon. member for Cambridge has run out the clock. However, I will allow the minister a few seconds to respond.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, first, I have to compliment the member for Cambridge. He has been very consistent all the way through in supporting our tough on crime agenda. He talked about balancing, and he has it right. However, I think his constituents should know that he has been consistent and has been forceful on that. It has been a big help to me and to my parliamentary secretary in getting our—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Resuming debate. The hon. member for Don Valley West.

Hon. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Lac-Saint-Louis.

When Canadians are asked about the greatest threat facing Canada today, they list one concern above all others: the climate change crisis. Climate change is seen by Canadians as a far greater threat to their future well-being than problems with the health care system, terrorism, crime or the war in Afghanistan.

With climate change, we face an unprecedented planetary crisis. Last week, the Nobel Peace Prize for 2007 was awarded to Al Gore and the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The world has understood the gravity of this crisis. Does the government?

As a historian, I can only find one parallel in our history where human activity has threatened the very future existence of the earth itself and that is all-out nuclear war. However, the difference between nuclear war and the climate change crisis is also great; in one case nuclear war and the actions of a few states and a few world leaders that would produce an instant irreversible catastrophe.

The climate change crisis, however, has been building over decades of industrial activity in the developed countries like Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany and Japan. All of us in the developed world are implicated as consumers, as users of energy and as people whose advanced living standards have depended on burning the fossil fuel which produces the CO₂ which contributes to climate change.

As politicians with limited time horizons facing, in our case, the possibility of elections at any time, it is hard to imagine a crisis which demands a global solution, a global effort requiring constant, dedicated work over decades and generations, country by country, industry by industry, citizen by citizen, and yet that is our challenge. History will judge our generation of politicians severely if, knowing what we know today about the causes and effects of climate change, we fail to act decisively in our time in the face of this great threat to the planet's very survival.

How does the Speech from the Throne respond to this mighty challenge? Given the minimal references to climate change in the first Speech from the Throne, there has been something of a deathbed conversion in the latest effort. There is a grudging recognition of the reality of climate change but no sense of urgency, indeed, no real conviction.

Who, after all, wrote the words in the Speech from the Throne? A Prime Minister who called the United Nations action on climate change a "socialist money sucking scheme"? A Prime Minister who only last December referred to "so-called greenhouse gases" as if calling the science itself into question? A Prime Minister who said that ordinary Canadians from coast to coast will not put up with what Kyoto will do to their economy and lifestyle when the benefits are negligible? We are talking about the survival of the planet and the benefits are negligible?

The Address

What have the Conservatives done as a government? Next to nothing. In fact, worse than nothing. We are now travelling in reverse. The Conservative government is trying to use its own failure to meet Kyoto targets as a political wedge. Canada will likely not meet its Kyoto target because the Prime Minister scrapped all climate change programs upon coming into office and then implemented weak substitutes that ignore our obligations.

The Conservatives have admitted that their so-called plan will result in absolutely no reductions in Canada's total greenhouse gas pollution during the first phase of Kyoto and will not even be in place before 2010.

According to the C.D. Howe Institute, the Deutsche Bank, the Pembina Institute and the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, the Conservatives will not meet their own far too modest targets and will allow this country's carbon emissions to increase until 2050 and beyond.

• (1240)

Last month, even the government's own advisory board, the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, expressed serious doubts as to the likelihood of any of the government's own targets being met.

Under two consecutive Conservative environment ministers, there has been no attempt to move forward seriously, not even an honest and full effort to curb greenhouse gas pollution. In fact, one of the Prime Minister's first acts in office was to scrap the previous government's plan, spend a year doing nothing and then arbitrarily reintroduce pieces of it to feign their commitment but with far less funding, less vigour, no coherence and altogether incompetent implementation. Consider the cockamamie auto rebate scheme that has infuriated manufacturers, auto workers and consumers who have yet to receive a penny.

The government's plan has no hope of meeting its own overly modest targets. It is nothing more than a wolf in sheep's clothing and, if we are to believe Tom Flanagan, so is the Prime Minister.

The government fails to understand that we need to do everything we can to reduce greenhouse gases while strengthening our economy. Instead of action and leadership, we have inaction and denial.

In many ways, Canada does serve as a guide to other nations, much like the North Star invoked in yesterday's throne speech, but the Prime Minister needs to open his eyes the next time he visits our far north and understand the scope of devastation from climate change facing entire communities and an entire way of life. The Prime Minister cannot choose to defend our northern sovereignty without also fighting climate change in a way that protects the very people who live there.

The Speech from the Throne made a curious claim about Canada's role on the international stage: "Canada is back". When it comes to Canada's leadership role in the world on climate change, we are back all right, way back, back of the pack, back out the door, down the street, out of town and hiding in the bush.

What Canada needs to do is treat the climate change crisis as seriously as we did the threat of Fascism in the 1930s. Our leader has

been described as obsessed and single-minded on the subject of climate change. That is right. Winston Churchill was described as obsessed and single-minded in his day. That is the leadership we need.

As in 1939, we need a total mobilization of our society and economy with the single purpose of winning the war against climate change. This means putting a price on carbon emissions. This means examining every aspect of our economy and society, from large, heavy industry to fossil-fueled electrical generation, to upstream oil and gas, to all aspects of transportation, to all our buildings, from housing to commercial, to all the energy-consuming appliances and heating and cooling machinery inside our buildings, to agriculture, forestry and the management of urban waste.

We need a tremendous national effort to reorient our economy and society to the 21st century, so we get energy, the environment and the economy, the three Es, pulling in the right direction.

As with World War II, Canada faces a crisis and an opportunity. Let us ignore the naysayers, the minimalists and those who have passed from denial to despair without an intervening period of hope. Let us mobilize ourselves and dedicate ourselves as Canadians in responding to the greatest challenge of our generation, the climate change crisis.

• (1245)

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the hon. member's speech and, quite honestly, I am somewhat dismayed by the hypocrisy that continues to flow from the Liberal benches when we talk about the environment and when we talk about the damaging effects of climate change.

This government has signaled quite clearly that it is moving to clean up Canada's act, to get the job done and to reverse the trend that occurred while that member was a member of the previous government and, in fact, a cabinet minister in the previous government. If he was so passionate about this issue, I would hesitate to guess that this country would be a long way ahead of where it is right now.

This government has stated clearly that it will clean up Canada's environmental act. We are moving forward with very aggressive targets, targets that have been saluted by the G-8, by APEC, the United Nations and others, to name a few.

We are moving in a positive direction. What I would like to know is when the Liberal Party will stop playing games on the environment and work with this government to get results.

We have been saying for a long time that we cannot deal with the environment in isolation. I am encouraged by one thing, which is that he actually spoke about the three Es because the Liberal Party has certainly not been speaking to that. Certainly Bill C-288 indicated that the Liberal Party has no concern whatsoever for either energy or the economy when it talks about the environment.

I am encouraged by that but I encourage the member to stop his partisan rhetoric and start working with this government to get real results on the environment, something his government never did.

The Address

Hon. John Godfrey: Mr. Speaker, in response to that intervention, I think the facts speak for themselves. We had Project Green in place, a project that had a large number of elements that were moving us toward a regulatory regime. This project was not totally dissimilar from the weak version that was subsequently proposed by the government. Had that been put forward, those regulations would be in place now.

If we did nothing, why is that the government then cancelled a bunch of programs that were great in value and then reintroduced them but in such a feeble form and losing a year of time to bring back things and relabel what we had already put forward?

It is a kind of tribute to our action that we saw this cancellation and then revival of programs. The Conservatives just failed to recognize what they were doing.

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my very learned colleague for his comments. I agree with everything he had to say about the environment.

I would like to ask him a question about something else that I know he has some interest in, which is post-secondary education. He is a former president of King's College, one of our most august liberal arts colleges in Canada.

The Speech from the Throne, which talks allegedly about productivity, mentions education once when it says on page 10, "families worry about the rising costs of higher education". I hope it did not take a lot of researchers in the Prime Minister's Office to figure that out. We know that. The question is: What is the government doing about it? What is the government doing to improve access for low income Canadians, persons with disabilities and aboriginal Canadians who cannot get post-secondary education?

We cannot tax cut our way to an education. We must invest in education. The Millennium Scholarship Foundation is one way. I will ask the member specifically whether he would support the reinvestment in the Millennium Scholarship Foundation and whether he has any faith that the government will do anything to improve access to post-secondary education.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): The hon. member for Don Valley West will want to know that he has 40 seconds to respond.

Hon. John Godfrey: Mr. Speaker, unlike most academics, I will need to talk much faster then.

I certainly agree with the thrust of the remarks by the member from Dartmouth. If we are to have this economy of the 21st century, it is crucial that people are equipped to deal with it. If we are to have innovation, we need to do it with the help of the labs, the work and the research that takes place in Canada's universities.

I certainly think that if we are to have a fair and just society that we need to make post-secondary education more accessible to people, which is the whole idea behind the Millennium Scholarship Foundation. I would very much support a reinvestment in that foundation.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to participate in this debate. This is the third time that I have participated in a debate in reply to the Speech from the Throne. I would like to sincerely thank the voters in my riding for providing me with this opportunity.

While listening to the throne speech, and when I read it more carefully later, a question crossed my mind. Why do we need another throne speech? Why did we need to prorogue Parliament, to delay its resumption, to suspend our work as legislators for a Throne speech that is so lacking in substance?

[*English*]

As I was saying, when I first read the speech, the first question that came to my mind was why. Why did we need a throne speech? Why did we prorogue Parliament? Why did we need a throne speech that offers so little other than reiterating unfulfilled promises made by the government in the last election campaign?

We have been talking about an Arctic port for quite a while. It is old news. Why are we putting old news in the throne speech? Why, if crime is so important, did we wait until the second throne speech to mention the still unfulfilled promise of adding 2,500 police officers? One would think it would be one of the first things the government would have done, to hear it speak the way it does about crime and the coming Armageddon.

Why did we prorogue? I think I have the answer and I think Canadians have the answer. Let us face it. The government was feeling the heat in the last session of Parliament. It felt it had to cut loose and take the focus off its weakness.

Let us look at all the broken promises. Let us look at all the mismanagement and incompetence of the last session.

An hon. member: We don't have time.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: My colleague says that we do not have time and I think he is right. We will have to extend the session if we want to get to that.

Let us look at the last budget, the largest spending budget in the history of Canada from a "conservative" government. Is that not something? That budget was from a Conservative government that raised taxes. Now there is a thought. It was from a Conservative government that, despite all the talk in the last election campaign, still has not solved the capital gains tax reform issue. Today the Minister of Finance said in the business pages in the *Globe and Mail* that he will get to it eventually. I think it is still alive as a promise but I do not really have much faith.

The Address

It is a government that could not get a climate change bill passed, after it promised over and over that it was going to get it done. How come it did not get done? It is the government's responsibility to get legislation through Parliament even if it is a minority government. It is its responsibility to work with the opposition to get things done. Why not?

Income trusts is a good example. What a flash reversal on a major campaign promise. The Prime Minister looked Canadians in the eye on television and said, "I will not tax income trusts". He put it in the platform. A few short months later there was a flash reversal—

Mr. Ed Fast: Let's talk about the RCMP investigation.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Which turned up nothing.

Let us talk about estimating budget surpluses. "Oh, yes, we can do a better job", the Prime Minister said, "We will estimate them properly". It turns out he was wrong. When he was questioned on that, what was his response? "Trust us, we tried harder". Did he try as hard as he did on climate change? I think so.

Child care is another good one. The government said, "We will cancel deals with the provinces" — that is cooperative federalism — "We will cancel deals with the provinces and create through the private sector 125,000 private child care spaces". The Minister of Human Resources and Social Development a couple of weeks ago said, "Excuse me. I don't think it will be possible. I apologize. We tried really hard but it is not going to be possible". That is another unfulfilled promise.

Let us look at the court challenges program. Here is a government that really cares about minority linguistic rights in this country. A program that helps francophone minorities outside of Quebec to fight for their charter rights, a program that helps the anglophone minority in Quebec, a great portion of which I represent, fight for their rights is gone. Why? Because the court challenges program was used to defeat a court case that the Prime Minister was involved in when he was head of the National Citizens Coalition. We know the Prime Minister likes personal vendettas and this is another example of a personal vendetta.

• (1255)

On Afghanistan, the Prime Minister himself admitted that he rushed the last vote. The Prime Minister is doing a lot of mea culpas. He rushed the last vote and got what he wanted, which was an extension until 2009, but whoops, I think it will be 2011. Members may recall the Liberal defence critic telling the government that it did not really mean 2009, that it meant 2011. The defence minister at the time said that the government meant 2009. Who is correct now?

I hope Tom Flanagan is not the person advising the PM on these issues. If he is, I suggest that the Prime Minister ask for his money back.

The throne speech is nicely packaged. The cover features a boy waving a flag and looking out to sea. There is no doubt it is in Newfoundland, which means he will probably be voting Liberal in the next election if he can vote. The sea stretches to the horizon and beyond. There is water everywhere. The photo is perhaps a bit misleading because it suggests that Canada is in possession of an over-abundance of water, which is not the case. We only have 7% of

the world's renewable freshwater to go with the 7% of the land mass that we occupy.

The photo is misleading in another way. It suggests that the government cares about water. Members may recall that I tabled a motion about a year ago calling on the government to produce a national water strategy. No doubt the government and its researchers and policy advisers read the order paper six months later and said that the motion was a good idea so it should be put in the budget. There was passing reference in the budget to creating a national water strategy.

I expected great things in this throne speech. There is very little mention of water in this speech. As a matter of fact, the *Kingston Whig-Standard* yesterday had a headline reading, "Conservative water strategy still murky following speech". All we heard about water in this throne speech is a repetition of a couple of promises in the budget speech to do a bit more for the Great Lakes, but still not as much as what we had in our election platform.

The throne speech is a very thin document. It will require some work. We will see if the government can do better when it has to table the details of this speech. Essentially, we have served notice on the government that it gets a passing grade on this, but barely. It has to do better on the mid-term.

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague across the way for giving the throne speech a passing grade. Coming from the opposition, that is probably the closest we could get to a ringing endorsement.

A couple of things really bother me. I do not know why my colleague criticized the fact that we are spending money on some great programs that Canadians are looking for. It is almost laughable because that comes from a member who was part of the government of former prime minister Paul Martin, who—

• (1300)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): The hon. member is sufficiently experienced to know that he should not identify other members by their name but by the names of their riding.

Mr. Larry Miller: My apologies, Mr. Speaker.

When the former prime minister knew there was no chance in heaven of ever coming back to this House as the prime minister of Canada, he started giving out more than \$1 billion a day for weeks on end.

The Address

The bottom line is that members of the party opposite will say anything when their backs are against the wall, and this brings me to my question. For years those members have been saying that they want to cut taxes. They had 13 years to do that, but they did not do it. They said that they wanted to get strong on the environment. The present Leader of the Opposition, when he was the environment minister said that he was going to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 6%. Not only did the Liberals not do that, but emissions increased by 30% to 35%. Again they did not do what they said they were going to do. Those members are all talk and no action.

The Liberals stood up during the last election and said that they were going to fight crime, something which the Conservative Party ran on. In the last year and a half they have fought it. Why should Canadians believe that the Liberals are serious about this now? If they are serious about this, then they will support our crime bills. They will support the initiatives that are here. They said they will at one point. I want to know, will they actually do it when their backs are up against the wall?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, I note that the hon. member has been here all morning listening to the debate. I commend him for that.

I would like to correct a couple of misstatements. The previous government did cut taxes. It cut \$100 billion worth of taxes. I think it was in the 2000 budget, I cannot recall exactly—I was elected in 2004—but I believe it was in the 2000 budget.

I will not indulge in the same kind of rhetoric as the government and I will not claim that the members opposite, even though we are of different parties and we see things differently, are in favour of crime. We are told every day from the members opposite that Liberal members are in favour of crime which is absolutely absurd. It is consistent with the kind of hyperbole we hear from the other side. However, until government members are ready to stand up for the gun registry, they have no business saying that they are tough on crime.

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me where the environment is concerned in the speech from the member for Don Valley West, there is a credibility gap that is causing us all some problems.

One is the 13 years, or 12 point something years as was pointed out this morning, that the Liberals had in office and were expected to do something about climate change and Kyoto. The member being a very credible champion on the environment, how did that happen under his watch?

The other problem is that the Conservatives in their Speech from the Throne have really nothing more to offer except a criticism of the inaction of the previous government. That is causing us all some real concerns and problems. Maybe the member for Don Valley West could explain to us how this could have happened under his watch.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): The clock has run out. I will not recognize the hon. member for Don Valley West, but the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis for a short response.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, climate change is the issue of the millennium. It is a complex issue and it requires laying a foundation. It requires building public commitment to get behind government initiatives to combat climate change, which are

controversial because they challenge consumers and they challenge businesses.

How easily can we do that when every day in the House of Commons sitting opposite us is the Prime Minister who says that climate change does not exist and that Kyoto is some kind of socialist plot.

• (1305)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Resuming debate, the hon. Minister of Public Safety.

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to address issues related to the Speech from the Throne.

I would like to start by thanking my constituents in the Okanagan and Nicola valleys, some of the most beautiful territory in all of Canada, I might add. Some of the ideas for the very elements that are in the Speech from the Throne germinated from constituents around the Okanagan and Nicola valleys in the constituency of Okanagan—Coquihalla who, over the past number of years, have brought to me concerns related to some of the elements I want to address today in the Speech from the Throne, notably areas related to safety and security.

[*Translation*]

It is a priority for each level of government to have a country and communities with safe and secure roads, countryside and schools. That is very important. It is a priority.

[*English*]

It should be the priority of every government that the safety and security of its citizens is paramount. I want to touch on some of the ways in which we have demonstrated that in the last year and half or so. I would then like to reflect on what we heard in the Speech from the Throne yesterday that is specifically related to some of the initiatives on criminal justice reform which will enhance not just safety and security in the country but the sense of safety and security that we have in our country or that we need to have.

We can look at statistics and we can also look at this in an anecdotal way. Today I want to do both. I have an uncle who lives in the Okanagan Valley. Obviously he is a senior citizen, being my uncle, and not that long ago in the middle of the afternoon as he was walking in his residential area to the grocery store he was approached by two males. They did not appear to be armed, but they told him, and he is a frail gentleman, that they wanted his wallet or they were going to beat him senseless right on the sidewalk.

This is a not uncommon occurrence across our country. There are people who do not have a fear of repercussions or an understanding of the consequences of their actions. I can apply that anecdote statistically. Across the country from Vancouver to Halifax and from our southern borders to our northern borders, this adds up to a sense of apprehension Canadians have that communities are not as safe as they could be.

The Address

I believe that if we were to ask Canadians if they feel that streets are safer now than they were two years ago with regard to some of the things we have been doing, most Canadians would say yes, but in fact there is more to do. We have committed to 1,000 more RCMP officers on our streets from coast to coast. We know that the visibility of peace officers, just their presence, has the effect of lowering crime in any particular area in which their presence is obvious.

We have committed to that. That is fully and federally funded. Also, the \$37 million required to expand the training facilities at depot is already in play. Not long ago I was out at depot in Regina, the training facility for the RCMP, and I saw that some of the new facilities are already online. I met with many of the young cadets and spoke to a graduating class. I can tell members that I am very encouraged. I have a real sense of security and a sense of pride at the type of people the RCMP continues to attract and to graduate to serve us in our communities around the country.

Further to the 1,000 officers at the RCMP level, we have also made a commitment to work with provinces and municipalities so that we will have 2,500 more municipal officers across the country. I have been in discussions with my counterparts at the provincial and territorial level, the solicitors general and attorneys general, to discuss the funding formula. This is not 100% funded by the federal government. It is going to be cost shared.

At our borders we have begun the process of hiring 400 additional border officers to put an end to what we call work alone situations, in which border officers often are required to work in remote locations and to work there alone, which really is not conducive to a sense of safety or security, either for the people living along the border or for the border officers themselves.

We also have followed through on our commitment that our border officers, after decades of asking for this, finally will be trained and equipped to have side arms so they can handle dangerous situations when they get alerted that dangerous and armed individuals are approaching the border. As we know, that has not been in place for decades, the result of which has been that border officers have felt they actually have to vacate their posts because they receive an indication that armed and dangerous individuals are approaching them. They have to close down the border at that point, alert the police of the jurisdiction, be it the RCMP or municipal police, and wait for them to arrive.

All of the incumbent difficulties with this, not the least of which are long lineups that result, especially at busy border points, have been counterproductive, both on business and trade and certainly for travellers back and forth across the border. We have moved in a number of areas on this. I made an announcement last January for a commitment of \$430 million strictly on the technological side to improve our borders and our capability of moving people efficiently across the border, but also to make it very difficult for dangerous individuals or in fact dangerous cargo to be moving across the border.

●(1310)

[*Translation*]

It is a challenge to keep our borders open to travellers who are not a threat but to close the borders to those who represent a threat to our country.

[*English*]

We need to have that balance at our borders.

Therefore, on the resource side we have been there and we continue to be there. We have increased resources for the RCMP, resources that were eroded over a number of years by the previous regime, something that did not result in beneficial headway being made in terms of providing safety and security. When we take away the resources of the very people who are providing that safety and security, it does not lead to a positive conclusion.

We have increased the resources for our DNA centres and for the National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre. I would like to acknowledge today those individuals for the breakthroughs they have been involved in internationally in working with Interpol and other agencies in terms of bringing child predators to justice, including very recently a case that has been in the media whereby an individual allegedly involved in the exploitation of children is still being looked for. Once again, we and exploitation coordination centre experts are at the front and centre of this type of pursuit. We have also increased our resources in a number of other investigative areas.

Up to now I have been talking about enforcement. I have been talking about what I refer to as the long arm of the law. We also have to recognize that there are the open arms of the community. This is not all about enforcement. We have funded in a very significant way the groups at the local level who have the expertise, the know-how and the sense of what is happening on their own streets to have the types of programs that would prevent young people from even getting into a life of crime.

Many young people today are being attracted to gang activity, to illegal activities such as drug activities and others, which leads to the most tragic incidents we have seen in some time, with shootings on our streets and some of the most violent things that are taking place. Therefore, we fund with federal funds at a local level those groups and agencies that have proven they have a program that works. Those are the two words I use as criteria.

There are other more detailed criteria that flow from it, but we want to know what works in Canadians' communities. That is what we are saying to Canadians. We are asking them to show us what works in terms of identifying youth at risk, vulnerable families, progress toward reducing recidivism and programs projected to our aboriginal community. We are asking them to show us those programs, to show us what works, and we will fund it.

The Address

Along with that on the prevention side is the \$64 million the Prime Minister announced about three weeks ago for our anti-drug strategy, in which two-thirds of the resources are dedicated to awareness, prevention and actual treatment centres, which means literally more beds for treatment across the country, especially in dealing with drug and substance abuse and the addictions that go with it. We are very keen about and very focused on the prevention side.

Going back to the other side of that ledger, the enforcement side, our Minister of Justice announced today, and the Prime Minister announced yesterday in his comments responding to the Speech from the Throne, that there are some areas where we have to get tougher, if I can use those words, when it comes to the enforcement side and serious, repeat violent crime. That is what we are talking about.

Our police officers across the country and our various security agencies have told us for some time, for instance, that we need legislation to more capably and more effectively designate people as dangerous offenders. There are individuals out there who, it would appear, are impervious to attempts at rehabilitation, not that we would ever give up on an individual. I believe in rehabilitation and I believe a person's heart can change, but there are individuals whose actions are so violent and repetitive that these individuals literally should not be allowed on our streets. It would be extremely helpful to be able to designate people as dangerous offenders in a more effective way.

Opposition parties have resisted our ability to do that. We are not talking about thousands of people here. We are talking about a relatively small handful of people and about designating them as dangerous offenders and taking them off our streets. That is part of what we are proposing. It is part of what my colleague, the Minister of Justice, has proposed.

●(1315)

We are also proposing that when it comes to gun crime and people who commit crimes with firearms, especially in a repeated way, there should be mandatory jail terms. I am astonished that opposition members have resisted this. I am astonished that when the bill in its previous form went to committee, they watered it down. I am astonished that the majority of Liberals, when it came to a vote, voted against mandatory jail terms for the use of firearms in the commission of a crime. Why would the Liberals vote against that? Why would they not support it? It defies imagination. I have no idea, but our police officers tell us that we and they need that type of legislative tool to get some of the worst criminals off the street.

We have seen many situations whereby serious repeat violent offenders are arrested and it always falls upon the Crown to prove why they should be held in jail for their court times and not have bail. This is what we are talking about when it comes to repeat serious offenders. I have just read a docket on an individual with over 100 offences, almost two dozen of those being violent assaults, who is out on the streets again, with the impetus and the responsibility on the Crown to try to prove he should not be getting bail. That person should prove why he should have the right to be out on bail.

That is why we have this term: the reverse onus on bail. It is requiring these individuals, and again, we are talking about serious repeat offenders, to prove why they should have the right to be out there threatening our citizens on the street.

When it comes to protecting our children, I can remember sitting as an opposition member, a memory which I hope I will never have to relive as a member of Parliament. I hope the good people of Canada will continue to support what we are doing and I will not have to go through the situation of being in opposition, but there we were as an opposition caucus about four years ago getting a presentation from the Toronto police related to this very serious area of the exploitation of children, especially on the Internet. The officer who was presenting this talked about the fact that in Toronto alone in one year they seized over two million exhibits of children being exploited on the Internet and through other means.

The police begged. They said, "Please, continue to put pressure on the government of the day to raise the age of consent between a minor and an adult to at least 16 years". We are not talking about between teenagers here.

We asked the government of the day to do that. For years we asked the government to do that and the Liberals never did it. They never stood up to protect our kids in that way. I remember saying in those days that any government of the land that does not stand up to protect the children of the land really forfeits the right to govern the land. That Liberal government is not governing any longer and yet the Liberals continue to resist, now in a Liberal-dominated Senate, this simple request to raise the age of protection for children from 14 to 16.

My constituents ask me what would motivate a group of individuals in the Senate to not want to protect children by raising the age of consent from 14 to 16. I do not know. I cannot explain it. I cannot explain why for years the Liberals opposite, right here in this assembly, resisted doing that, but they did. I do not understand it. I know most of my Liberal colleagues. I think they are decent people, but somewhere their thinking is wired in the wrong direction on this.

On Bill C-2, we are talking about a bill that addresses the area of serious, repeat violent crime. That is what we are asking for. It has been debated. It has been watered down by the opposition members. It has been out there for too long. The people of Canada deserve better. The people of Canada deserve to have a sense that the people who say they represent them are indeed doing that.

I believe this bill is going to accomplish something else. Often when opposition members leave this place at the end of the week, they go home and talk tough on these issues at home. But when they get back here, where they think they are in the safety of this chamber, they vote against the very measures they told their constituents they were going to be tough about.

●(1320)

Those days are over. The opposition is going to vote against dealing with serious repeat criminals. It will be obvious. The opposition will have to stand here and have to vote, and their constituents are going to see where they really stand. It is time to stand up for safety and security in our country.

The Address

[Translation]

We want a country that is more safe and secure. Naturally, we now have a safe country, but we must focus our attention on this matter particularly with Bill C-2.

[English]

I will close with a comment on national security. Canada is not immune to threats of terror. About four years ago Canada was listed with several other countries on a list by Osama bin Laden. Canada was on that list as a target country. Canada is the only one that was on that particular list and has not been hit. We want to keep it that way. It is our intention to keep it that way.

Our police officers need certain legislative provisions to help them in their job. To protect the national security of our country there are some provisions in the Anti-terrorism Act and a provision in our security certificate process. People from coast to coast have commented on this, from Vancouver to Halifax, from the north to the south and all points in between, that one thing that we have resolved is these provisions that will help us in dealing with the risk of terror incidents here in Canada.

Many of these provisions were put in place by the Liberals. They had a sunset clause on them, which is a good thing to have. It meant that after five years we evaluate those provisions to see if they have been abused in any way.

The provisions in the Anti-terrorism Act and the provisions of the security certificates were seen not to have been abused. That will be coming back.

I am asking the Leader of the Opposition to listen to the many Liberals and former Liberals, including the former deputy prime minister, the former public safety minister, my predecessor, and others. They are saying to the leader of the Liberal opposition, "please allow these protections to go through. Please allow our agencies to be equipped with the legislative tools they need to effectively protect us from acts of terror and people who are planning acts of terror".

Strangely and shockingly, the Leader of the Opposition has flip-flopped on that issue. At least his last intention was not to support it. I believe that time here in this Chamber has allowed him to reconsider, just as it allowed him to reconsider not voting against the Speech from the Throne. He had some thought. He thought about the ramifications of that and he decided to support us in a meagre way.

I am asking that when it comes to safety and security, I am appealing to all colleagues in this House, that we would set aside partisan differences and vote together for a country that will be safe and a country that will be secure.

•(1325)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's thoughtful speech. I have two questions. My first is related to the border. I appreciate the attempts that the minister is making to improve security on our border. I think that is very important.

I met with representatives from the Canadian Chamber of Commerce yesterday. One of the things they said the federal government could do to help in relation to the border was speeding up border crossings. I know this is not in the minister's department,

but he sits in cabinet. Is he aware of any initiatives that the government is doing to help improve the flow, while also increasing security? I think that would be helpful.

My second question is related to the statement on national security and strengthening the Anti-terrorism Act. I have no problem with improvements in those areas.

As I am sure the minister remembers, when these items came up in the past, there was a passionate debate on the balance of individual rights in relation to how much was necessary to actually ensure the security of Canadians. I am hoping that the minister is taking due consideration of that. Are there any particular steps that he is taking to make sure that individual rights are protected, but still increasing security as is required for Canadians?

Hon. Stockwell Day: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to border security, it does fall under areas of my jurisdiction and I could ask the member for Yukon to reassure the members of the chamber, with whom I meet also, that we are following up on a number of their particular suggestions related to this balance of having borders that are secure but borders that allow low-risk travel to move quickly across.

I would encourage all Canadians to think of applying for what is known as the NEXUS card. One can go online to apply for that at getnexus.com or at the public safety website. A NEXUS card would allow a person far more rapid access across the border.

We have been very vigorous pursuing the area of the western hemisphere travel initiative which is a U.S. law requiring all Canadians, and Americans as a matter of fact, to have a passport when they travel to the United States. We have been successful in negotiating some alternative documents for that, but I can tell members that the Americans intend to apply that particular law at the land borders sometime next year; they are saying as early as January.

We are asking that they give consideration to delaying that, but we are working with the provinces and territories in a number of areas to allow for what is called an enhanced driver's licence that would have criteria that would allow a person to use their driver's licence to actually get into the United States. So, we are using a number of these provisions.

I can assure the member opposite that we are listening closely to the all-party committees that have given advice into this area of balancing security with safety and our civil rights to make sure that when we are trying to keep terrorists from harming Canadians, we will make sure our civil rights are protected at the same time. It is a fine balance and we will work closely with members like the member for Yukon to get that balance right.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister knows that we share his objective of reducing crime rates. However, although we agree with some of the solutions he would like to propose, we do not agree with all of them. Like the minister, we believe that offenders who repeatedly commit serious crimes deserve harsher sentences. I noted that the proposed minimums are less harsh than what the courts normally impose.

The Address

I would like to know if the minister does indeed have a study on appeal court decisions concerning offenders who repeatedly commit serious crimes and on the sentences upheld by the appeal courts. We know that, every day across Canada, thousands of judges hand down thousands of decisions. It is quite possible that some of these decisions are very poorly reported in the media, which gives the public a false impression of our judges' decisions. In any case, even if some judges make mistakes, we have appeal courts to reverse those decisions.

Does the minister have a study that proves that appeal courts are not imposing the minimum sentences they would like to impose on offenders who repeatedly commit serious crimes? We oppose minimum sentences because, for several reasons, minimum sentences have never successfully reduced crime rates nor have they prevented crime. What they do is force judges, in exceptional circumstances, after they have examined all the relevant factors, to hand down decisions that go against their conscience.

Thus, before we force judges to impose such sentences, it would be worthwhile to determine, with certainty, if the appeal courts are upholding sentences that are not harsh enough. If trial judges are not imposing these sentences, the next step, in my opinion, should not be Parliament; it should be the appeal process.

● (1330)

Hon. Stockwell Day: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I can say sincerely that we agree with our colleagues on many aspects of the anti-crime bill. But there are other issues on which we do not agree with them.

I have met a few times with my counterpart from Quebec, the minister whose portfolio is similar to mine, on the provincial side. We want to develop agreements whereby we can continue to recognize the areas of jurisdiction of the provinces, especially Quebec, that have developed their own specific programs. We will continue to work respectfully with the Government of Quebec and the people of Quebec.

Regarding mandatory minimum sentences, my colleague said that there are no studies proving that mandatory minimum sentences can prevent crime. I do not agree with him.

We know one thing for sure: people who are in prison cannot commit crimes against our citizens. For each individual case, there would be no crime committed against our citizens.

In response to his question about the appeal courts, it is true that there are documents that show the severity of appeal court sentences and can be used to determine whether judges hand down stiffer sentences to repeat offenders. Three weeks ago, I produced a list of judgments in courts in western Canada. The list shows that people who have committed 50, 60, 70, 80 and sometimes more than 100 crimes continue to receive very light sentences.

I understand that judges have reasons for the decisions they hand down. I am not arguing with that. But if offenders receive stiffer sentences, of more than two years, they are sent to a federal rather than a provincial prison, and they can benefit from addiction treatment programs that can prevent them from reoffending.

● (1335)

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by saying that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park.

As well, since this is my first formal speech in the House since winning the byelection last September 17, I would like to thank the voters in the riding of Outremont for the trust they placed in me. I shall prove myself worthy of that trust by working with the same resolve and determination I have always shown in carrying out my duties, whether as a member of the National Assembly or in other capacities throughout my career.

This byelection may well have heralded a shift that will prove very important on the political scene in Quebec and Canada. The Speech from the Throne this week provided a few examples of this change. Take two issues in particular that were mentioned in the Speech from the Throne: Afghanistan and the environment, especially the Kyoto protocol, which people very often mentioned and had questions about during my election campaign.

When deciding last April to lend my experience and voice to the NDP, at the request of our leader, I realized that my personal priorities—those that have always motivated me in my political life—were in fact the priorities of the NDP. Genuine, ongoing, credible concerns about the environment and sustainable development, a strong voice for peace and the role that Canada has always played in the world, and an honest desire to ensure that the prosperity we enjoy in our society is equitably distributed: that is the kind of message that we brought forward in a campaign lasting several months in our case.

I joined the NDP in April but the byelection was not called until July 28. Nevertheless, we had already been working away in Outremont for months. We knew what a challenge it would be. More than one commentator remarked that Outremont was an impregnable Liberal stronghold. Well, the impregnable stronghold has fallen. I am very proud to be one of the first NDP members to represent a Quebec riding.

As I went door to door, the two major issues people wanted to talk about were first, the environment, and second, Afghanistan. I would like to discuss both of these issues as part of the debate on this week's Speech from the Throne so that we all understand the major change taking place in Canada and Quebec.

The Address

I would say that over the past forty years, the dividing line in Quebec politics—which has had an enormous influence on federal politics in Canada—has been between positions on constitutional issues, not on economic or social issues. Members of Quebec's National Assembly fell either to the right or the left of that dividing line. Those on one side were united by their vision of an independent Quebec, and those on the other by their belief that Canada was much better off with Quebec, that Quebec was better off with Canada, and that it was entirely possible to be both a Quebecker and a Canadian.

Others see things differently and are truly trying to make Quebec an independent country. I have always made it clear that I do not support that vision. However, I have spent my whole working life in Quebec, and I can tell you that the vision of an independent Quebec is shared by people who understand that when one speaks of the Quebec nation, it has to be more than lip service; it has to mean something real.

● (1340)

As for the environment, let us look at how we differ from the current Conservative government and the previous Liberal government.

It is an interesting week for this comparison. This week, the former prime minister, Mr. Chrétien, published his memoirs. It is interesting to note that in his memoirs, he blames his successor, who is still a member here. He himself says that it was his successor's fault that Canada was not able to meet its Kyoto objectives. Interestingly, the current leader of the Liberal Party was the environment minister when this successor was prime minister.

An hon. member: This is unbelievable.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: In other words, a former Liberal prime minister who was in power for more than 10 years is now saying that we did not meet our Kyoto objectives because of the current leader of the Liberal Party. What is very true is that for 13 years, instead of reducing greenhouse gases in Canada, the Liberals ended up with an increase unparalleled anywhere else in the world. No Kyoto signatory experienced such large increases in its greenhouse gases.

The current Conservative government is trying to use this negligence, this incompetence, as a pretext for its continued inaction. That is precisely what is proposed in the throne speech.

During my door-to-door visits in Outremont, people asked us to get over the two splits that have divided us for too long. They asked us to get over the old division that makes us look only at our constitutional position and to disregard what we were going to do for future generations regarding the economy or social justice. They asked us to bring the vision and the priorities of the NDP to this House, to represent this riding in Quebec. This is why I am so proud to be the NDP member for Outremont.

The other file that was most often addressed after the environment was, of course, the current combat mission in southern Afghanistan. I would like to state very clearly that our troops, the Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan, all deserve our utmost respect and admiration for their dedication. However, it is our job to say that we certainly do not share the government's vision regarding this military intervention, following the lead of the Americans at this time. In our view, as several experts have indicated, this mission is

doomed to failure. To put it very clearly, we believe that there is less security in Afghanistan today, not more. Although people may convince themselves that this is noble mission, we must look at the facts.

The facts are that dozens of young Canadians have come home in coffins and leading experts are telling us that we must pursue a comprehensive peace process. That is precisely the message of the NDP and this is also why I am so proud to work for future generations and the environment, for peace and a more equitable vision of society for all Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would take this opportunity to welcome the new member for Outremont to the House. I know he worked very hard to win that riding, as many of us do during elections to win our respective ridings. I congratulate him for that.

However, there is an incomplete vision, I believe, on the part of the NDP with respect to Afghanistan. The NDP members say that they do not support the current mission but they have not provided any vision of the type of mission they would support. Although they often say that they would like to provide aid, they do not say aid to whom, which is the big question. Without security, there can be no aid and no development. We cannot help the women and six million children who are going to school.

I ask the hon. member to please think about the long term effects for the six million children who are currently in school and what a profound difference that will make in Afghanistan over the next 20 years.

Could the member share some of that vision? Does he understand that the six million children currently in school will make a significant difference on the future of Afghanistan? I would like to hear the answers.

● (1345)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Peterborough for his comments. I want to assure him that in my view, we have worked on this issue long enough to offer a valid opinion.

From our point of view, there is less security in this poor country—and I use that word on purpose. Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world that has been at war almost without pause since the former Soviet Union's invasion in December 1979.

Afghans have the right to benefit from all of Canada's peacekeeping experience and credibility. Since Operation Enduring Freedom, the creation of the international security assistance force and the exclusion of certain parties from the Bonn process, we have become more or less stuck in a U.S. led war. We feel this is a serious mistake.

Let us use our credibility and our peacekeeping experience. Let us go back to being peace builders. The women and children the hon. member so eloquently spoke of would truly be able to live a better life in the future.

The Address

Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I join my voice with those of all my colleagues in welcoming the hon. member to the House of Commons. I congratulate him on his election and I wish him much success in his career in Parliament.

I have the following question for him. I would like to know his thoughts on the issue of limiting or even eliminating federal spending power in provincial jurisdictions.

I am sure that, like me, he prefers solid social programs and federal government intervention in concert with the provincial governments, in order to improve the quality of life of Canadians, especially those who have fewer resources than others who do not have as much need for social programs. Often, whether in health care, employment insurance, child care or early education, these social programs require the federal government to intervene in provincial jurisdictions.

I would like to know his opinion on what might be in the bill the Conservative government will introduce.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from West Nova for his question, and I will take the liberty of recommending that he carefully read the record of what his own leader said yesterday. He may realize that his position is rather at odds with that of his leader on this very important question, which has often led to heated discussions here in Canada.

If the member would like to know the NDP position on this issue, he need only read the important bill on child care. It contains a very clear provision which exempts Quebec from the application of this legislation, since Quebec already has a position. That is what the NDP leader clearly stated yesterday.

I can also say to the member that what is being proposed here does not create any difficulties for us, quite the contrary. If he were to examine NDP history, he would see that for the past 30 years we have always clearly understood that Quebec is a nation. It is not just a nation in a vague and vacuous sense. There must be meaning to this expression.

That is an indication that this position will restrict federal intervention in areas of exclusive jurisdiction, bearing in mind the different definitions that have been proposed. We are all waiting to see—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): The hon. member for Parkdale—High Park.

[*English*]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to take part in the debate. It is a privilege for me to speak in the House on behalf of my constituents in Parkdale—High Park in Toronto.

The riding that I represent in the west end of Toronto is bordering on Lake Ontario and it is home to many newcomers to Canada who make their home in Canada's largest city. It is also home to many young families who are squeezed by the high cost of housing, the lack of child care and the erosion of community spending.

Many seniors in our area, who have worked hard all their lives to build our country, now believe our country is leaving them behind. We have many artists and people who work in the cultural sector

who are very concerned about the government's lack of vision and support for the arts.

[*Translation*]

Our community is also concerned about climate change, food safety and clean water. Many of our young people are facing a difficult future because our city has lost over 125,000 industrial-sector jobs in the past five years. Moreover, tuition fees and student debt are skyrocketing.

● (1350)

[*English*]

I am proud that our caucus is guided by its principles and knows what it believes. Like most hard-working Canadians, we believe that the government is taking this country in the wrong direction and the agenda laid out in the throne speech continues to take Canada down the wrong path.

It is breathtaking that the government has massive financial surpluses and yet does not even mention the needs of cities in the throne speech, even as our cities are cash-strapped, our services squeezed and our infrastructure crumbling.

Toronto is our largest city. We pay a lot of money in taxes and yet our city gets to keep only 6¢ out of every tax dollar as the province and the federal government get the lion's share.

In spite of calls from our citizens, the big city mayors, the boards of trade and many others, the government refuses to recognize that Canada is the world's second most urban country with 80% of our population living in cities.

With an estimated infrastructure deficit of over \$100 billion, our cities are in dire straits. Our federal government is rolling in cash but it would prefer to use our tax dollars to fund a combat mission in Afghanistan than to invest in our communities.

[*Translation*]

Rather than cut the GST by 1% at a cost of \$5 billion, the government could have used that money to help as many citizens as possible by investing in our cities.

[*English*]

It is astounding that the throne speech does not mention the arts or culture when so many Canadians believe in the need for us to tell each other our stories. Living next door to the largest cultural exporter in the world, surely the government needs to lay out its vision for supporting our artists and our culture.

Artists will continue to produce art. They will do this anyway, even though most of them are living in poverty, but fewer and fewer of us will have access to these stories if our government does nothing to encourage Canadian stories and Canadian voices.

The Address

[Translation]

A handful of members of the elite are benefiting from the current economy, but nobody else is. CEOs are banking stupendous salaries and incredible bonuses, but paycheques for everyone else have not changed, and, for many families, they are getting smaller. The government's agenda has made it harder and harder for middle-class Canadians to make ends meet.

[English]

Yes, there are more than a million people in Toronto who live below the poverty line. Many of these people go to work every day but they are working for poverty wages, often in multiple jobs, and they simply cannot make ends meet. I see them and their children at community kitchens and food banks. I see them leaving very early heading out for jobs as caregivers and in hotels and restaurants. Many are newcomers with excellent credentials being ground down in low wage jobs in the bitter deception that they would be welcomed for the education and skills that they bring to this country.

Even for families who are doing better, parents ask me why we cannot build a community centre in a neighbourhood full of kids. Why should a swimming pool close down and our kids and seniors be denied a chance for healthy exercise and life-saving classes? Why are we threatened with less transit service rather than promised more? Why is traffic gridlock a blight in our city and more kids are developing asthma?

The average Canadian is working 200 more hours each year than he or she did just nine years ago. The income gap is growing and it is at a 30 year high. Something is fundamentally wrong with this picture and Canadians know it.

The direction we are taking is absolutely the wrong direction. The prosperity gap is growing and putting middle class families further and further behind.

The government could have chosen to reduce the gap between the rich and the rest of us. Reducing the gap should have been a priority for the present session. Instead, the Conservatives chose to do nothing.

They have not acted to alleviate the manufacturing crisis. On the contrary, they are continuing the Liberal plan of negotiating a free trade agreement with Korea, which would make the disastrous manufacturing trade deficit within this country even worse and destroy more Canadians jobs.

[Translation]

What we need is real leadership in key economic sectors, but the Conservative agenda offers no hope to families and communities that have experienced massive job losses because of the government's destructive policies.

• (1355)

[English]

Canadians are also concerned about the crisis of climate change and what it will mean for the future. They are angry that the current government and the preceding government failed to get Canada on the right track for tackling the crisis of climate change. The air we

breathe is getting dirtier, not cleaner. We are facing an unprecedented global crisis and inaction is simply inexcusable. We must act.

We need to work harder to honour our national obligations to stop climate change and blaming the previous government is simply not good enough. It is time to act.

Canadians want to be proud of Canada on the international stage.

[Translation]

Lots of people have told me that they are against Canada's combat mission in Afghanistan. They do not think that this is the role Canadians want their country to play on the world stage.

[English]

Canada has been a consistent voice for peace, reconstruction and aid. We speak on behalf of millions of everyday Canadians who want the government to change direction in Afghanistan and bring about real peace and security and a peace that is lasting. Only the NDP has been clear and consistent on this issue, which is that it is the wrong mission for Canada. We are the only party calling for an immediate troop withdrawal.

I have a mandate to support the goals of my community and, therefore, I must oppose the direction of the government and the agenda laid out in the throne speech. It takes Canadians in the wrong direction and we should not support it.

Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the hon. member and, as in the past, it appeared that the member did not do her research very well. I would like to point out to her that the throne speech specifically mentions a phenomenal infrastructure program with an historic amount of money for our cities.

Now that the member knows that the throne speech does address that, is she willing to phone her riding and the city of Toronto and explain why she intends to vote against the program she is criticizing?

I have heard the hon. member criticize the government before on affordable housing for aboriginal communities, for the homeless and those who are in need. I want her to agree to phone her constituents and admit to this House that she intends to vote against these positive initiatives so that we can remind her of that when she criticizes the government the next time.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, I am a little astounded by the member's comments given that the throne speech does not mention cities once. Would the hon. member show me where in the throne speech cities are mentioned? Where is the urban agenda? It is breathtaking that the government has no vision for the cities of our country where the vast majority of Canadians live and work.

Our transit systems are not growing with the needs of our communities. Our cities are in gridlock. We have a crisis with respect to homelessness. The Conservative government is turning its back on the needs of the vast majority of Canadians.

Statements by Members

I not only will vote against this throne speech but I will stand with pride with my NDP caucus to vote against it. I am proud to defend our principles and to show the constituents of my riding that the government is moving in the wrong direction for Canadians.

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with one thing the member for Parkdale—High Park said and that is that the direction the government is taking is fundamentally wrong.

My colleague talked about housing, child care, seniors, climate change, student tuition, cities, urban transit, student summer work programs, et cetera. The NDP made some recommendations with respect to all of these issues for the 2005 budget, which the Liberal government accepted at that time, so why did she betray her constituents and vote against the government at that time? The reason the Conservatives are in power today is because of the NDP. Why did she betray her constituents?

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, I am little confused by the hon. member's question since I was not elected in 2005 and, therefore, was not in the House to vote one way or the other. I am a little baffled by the arrogance of the hon. member who would presume to undermine the democratic process and the will of Canadians who exercise their democratic right to elect some members and not elect other—

• (1400)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): We will now have statements by members according to Standing Order 31.

I recognize the hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

WATERLOO REGIONAL POLICE CHIEF

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I want to pay respect to one of the most honourable men I have ever had the pleasure of knowing.

For the past 15 years, the residents of Waterloo region have enjoyed safe streets and a safe community, thanks in large part to the leadership of Waterloo Regional Police Chief, Larry Gravill.

Chief Gravill is Canada's longest serving police chief and he has served as the president of both the Ontario and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police.

Having met Larry as a fellow student at Waterloo Oxford District Secondary School many years ago, I have always known him as a man of exceptional character. Larry has served his community as a leader, as a public servant, as a man of character, integrity and honesty. Sadly, for all of us, he has announced his retirement from the Waterloo Regional Police force effective December 12 of this year.

It has been an honour to know Larry and to work with him. I thank him for his dedication and public service. As the sun sets on this chapter of his life, I am confident that it will rise and shine brightly on what lies ahead for Larry, Debbie and their family.

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like all members of the House to join me in congratulating the hon. member for Mississauga—Brampton South on the birth of his daughter at 3 a.m. this morning.

On this day in history, the British Privy Council decided in 1929 that women were persons under the law. Persons Day should be something to celebrate but, unfortunately, after this week's Speech from the Throne, Canadian women do not have much to celebrate these days.

Women were not even mentioned in the speech in spite of the fact that women constitute 52% of the population. Today, women still earn 77¢ for every dollar a man earns in Canada and 41.5% of single, divorced or widowed women over the age of 65 live in poverty.

According to the throne speech, the serious problem of theft ranks as a high priority for the Conservatives rather than the economic—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): The hon. member for Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher.

* * *

[Translation]

ORDER OF THE DAUGHTERS OF ISABELLA

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in this House to mark the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Order of the Daughters of Isabella, Marie-Marguerite circle No. 1351 in Longueuil, which will celebrate this event on October 20 with a mass and a dinner.

Through their various civic and charitable activities, the Daughters of Isabella work in unity, friendship and charity. The objectives of the group, for the women who are members, are to get to know one another better, broaden their circle of friends and pool resources so that they are better able to help one another.

On behalf of the people I have the honour of representing, I would like to recognize their spirit of mutual support, their commitment and their dedication within the Church, society and the family. I would like today to thank all these women for their involvement in the Longueuil community, and particularly to thank the regent of the order, Marie-Claire Brazeau, for her many years of dedication to its members.

* * *

[English]

CANADIAN FORCES

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, recently I had the opportunity to join in the members of Parliament military exchange tour with the men and women of the HMCS *Preserver* and the men and women of the HMCS *Iroquois*.

I am here to tell my colleagues in the House of Commons that if they ever have the same opportunity that I did last month, they should take up on it because the men and women on board these two vessels showed an outstanding display of competence, professionalism and sense of duty to their country.

I want to personally congratulate Rear Admiral Dean McFadden of MARLANT for the professionalism on board those two vessels and the rest of the fleet in Halifax. I also congratulate Colonel Bruce Ploughman at Shearwater for the outstanding work of the Sea Kings when they landed and took off on the deck of the *Iroquois*. The professionalism was simply outstanding. The respect toward women on board the vessels is something the navy can teach us in civilian society of how women should be treated in our country.

I stand here as a proud individual of the House of Commons who took a wonderful opportunity. I encourage all my colleagues to do the same.

Bravo Zulu to the men and women of the HMCS *Preserver* and the HMCS *Iroquois*.

* * *

● (1405)

BURMA

Mr. John Williams (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the House passed a motion to confer honorary Canadian citizenship on Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi for her self-sacrifice, commitment to democracy and for refusing to capitulate to a corrupt dictatorship.

She has been denied the opportunity to lead her people even though she convincingly won the election in 1990. Now the people of Burma are running the gauntlet of beatings, arrests and killings by the dictatorship. What is next? More violence, anarchy or civil war?

One thing is obvious: If people are denied the right to peacefully and democratically choose their government, they will march in the streets. If they are denied the right to march in the streets, violence will follow. If protests are violently suppressed, anarchy or civil war will follow.

There are brave people in Burma and I salute those who accept the dangers of challenging the gun-toting goons of the dictatorship to claim their democratic rights. The people's voice cannot be silenced, it will eventually be heard.

* * *

MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to highlight the challenges facing Canada's manufacturing sector. Our country desperately needs a manufacturing strategy that is innovative and robust, and one that helps to protect high-paying jobs in Canada.

[Translation]

Canada needs the kind of innovations that were proposed in the previous parliament, when the User Fees Act, Bill C-212, was enacted and brought into force. In cooperation with Canada's Chemical Producers, a law was enacted so that federal departments and organizations would take the impact on competition and responsible service standards into account in cost recovery mechanisms.

Statements by Members

[English]

This so-called new government could learn from the Liberal caucus' approaches to innovation and demonstrate that it is interested in reducing redundant red tape and in providing an optimal investment environment for our manufacturing sector.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to commend the Minister of Justice for his campaign to tackle crime.

Today he brought forward our comprehensive tackling violent crimes act. A recent survey has shown that two-thirds of Canadians like the direction our government has taken in fighting crime.

Canadians like the idea of serious jail time for serious gun crimes. They like the idea of tougher bail rules. They want to see children protected from predators. They also like the idea of cracking down on drunk and stoned drivers, and strangely enough, Canadians say they want dangerous offenders to face longer prison sentences.

Now Canadians want to see action. That is exactly what they will get from our Conservative government, but will they see action from the Liberal Party? Will the Liberal leader for once listen to Canadians and vote for our anti-crime strategy? Methinks the only thing the Liberal leader wants to do is save his own skin.

Will the Liberals ever stop being soft on crime?

* * *

[Translation]

MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at a time when the Quebec manufacturing sector is in jeopardy, the government has once again chosen to do nothing. No concrete measure was announced in the Speech from the Throne to assist the manufacturing sector. This true blue government still thinks that the free market can solve everything and that any state intervention can only have negative effects for industry.

All the while that the federal government is telling us that it is doing the right thing by doing nothing, Quebec has been losing more than 60,000 manufacturing jobs, since the Conservatives came to power.

When will this government understand that the new challenges of globalization call for immediate and effective measures to be taken by the federal government? What the Bloc Québécois is asking it to do, instead of trying to minimize the effects of the manufacturing crisis, is to live up to its responsibilities and support the workers and businesses affected by this crisis.

* * *

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what will it take for the Bloc to support the Speech from the Throne?

Statements by Members

Our government is not only supporting supply management and supporting our Quebec farmers in a tangible manner, but is also finally proposing to limit federal spending power in areas of provincial responsibility.

In the October 17 *La Presse*, André Pratte said that parties that vote against the throne speech would be opposing a measure sought by the Quebec governments for 40 years.

Is that what one would call defending Quebec's best interests?

It does not produce any tangible results, and the Bloc members would be voting against the Quebec governments. How ironic.

One thing is sure: for 20 months, Conservative members in Quebec have been taking action and working tirelessly to make a stronger Quebec within a united Canada. The Bloc can continue to defend its partisan interests; our government will continue to deliver the goods in the interests of Quebecers and Canadians. That is open federalism.

* * *

• (1410)
[English]

INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks Infectious Disease Day, a day to promote and advance action on infectious diseases.

Statistics show that infections acquired in health care settings alone kill 8,000 to 12,000 Canadians a year, and one in nine patients, an estimated 250,000 Canadians who are admitted to hospital every year, pick up infections while being treated for another health matter.

Not only does this put enormous unnecessary pressure on our health care system, but it costs the Canadian economy an estimated \$15 billion a year.

We need leadership from the government and a commitment to do what is necessary to protect the health and safety of Canadians. We need a Canada-wide strategy to deal with the ailments ranging from flu to deadly hospital-acquired infections and the possibility of a pandemic.

I join the numerous organizations representing the infectious disease sector in urging the government to develop and lead a national infectious disease strategy focusing on everything from proper handwashing to a comprehensive disease surveillance. The government needs to provide necessary funding for health facilities—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Prince Edward—Hastings.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nothing is a greater responsibility for any parliamentarian than to provide for the health and safety of our citizens. Sadly, under the former Liberal policy of denial, delay and tough talk but no action, today's crime problems fly in the face of our own constitutional promises of peace, order and good government.

Residents in my riding of Prince Edward—Hastings, and I believe all Canadians, want a government that is tough on crime and reliable on national security.

Clearly, it is past time to protect victims and to focus on criminals. I am proud to be part of a government that stands behind our police officers and our prosecutors as they stand at the front line of Canadian justice every day.

So I say to my opposition colleagues in this House that if they are truly serious about cracking down on crime, then show it by swiftly and unanimously passing Bill C-2, our much-needed, comprehensive violent crime act.

* * *

POVERTY

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday many of us wore white bands joining Canadians to stand up against poverty. This is not a one-day celebration; it is year-round work.

Now our words need action, money and a real plan. With leadership from this House and government, we will move past the empty words in the throne speech. We need a plan with an adequate budget, targets, timelines and accountability. A plan that could unite progressive social democrats and compassionate conservatives. It is working in Ireland where they invested in children and education and built affordable housing. Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador have their plans.

Parliament's human resources committee has passed my motion to study the prosperity gap and make recommendations. This must be a priority. Yesterday on the Hill a banner declared that poverty is a government policy. It is time that fighting poverty becomes government policy.

* * *

JORDAN ANDERSON

Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at this very moment, the University of Manitoba is awarding a posthumous degree to Jordan Anderson, a Canadian soldier killed in Afghanistan earlier this year.

Corporal Anderson, of the Edmonton-based 3rd battalion of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, was killed near Kandahar on July 4, along with five other Canadian soldiers and an Afghan interpreter.

Anderson was a political studies major completing his arts degree through the military support office at the University of Manitoba. I understand this will be the first degree conferred posthumously upon a serving member of the military killed in wartime and I congratulate the U of M for this important initiative.

I would like to recognize Corporal Anderson's wife, Amanda, who will be attending the ceremony along with members of Anderson's military unit who are currently working to set up a scholarship in his name at the university.

I would ask all members of this House to join me in acknowledging the Anderson family's contribution to this country and congratulate them for this well-deserved posthumous degree.

* * *

[Translation]

NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

Mr. Marcel Lussier (Brossard—La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last Saturday, the general council of the Bloc Québécois paid tribute to Al Gore and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the IPCC, who received the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of their fight against climate change.

I would like to quote Al Gore:

—as long as our civilization as a whole continues to have a mindset that promotes the domination and exploitation of the natural world solely for short-term profit, the devastation will continue. I am convinced that we must choose one course of action unequivocally: we must make saving the environment the backbone of our civilization. And it is time to think about how that can be accomplished.

It is to be hoped that this great conviction will further this cause with the international community and the Conservative government. The Bloc Québécois continues to nurture that hope.

* * *

•(1415)

[English]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is Persons Day. For the past 78 years, Canadians have celebrated the historic ruling that stated women are persons under the law.

Unfortunately, there is not much to celebrate lately. Since 2006, the Conservative government has consistently attacked women's equality. The Prime Minister has made no attempt to fulfill his 2006 campaign promise to "take concrete and immediate measures, as recommended by the United Nations, to ensure that Canada fully upholds its commitments to women in Canada".

Was this just another empty promise to get the Conservatives elected? In addition, the Conservative government has made it clear that women's advocacy groups will not be eligible for funding. Several women's equality-seeking groups have either closed their doors or are getting ready to do so.

Normally a day of jubilation, this Persons Day has a dark cloud over it.

* * *

[Translation]

ROBERVAL—LAC-SAINT-JEAN

Mr. Denis Lebel (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to speak in this House. I want to thank all the people in the electoral district of Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean who placed their trust in me. For the first time in 13 years, they

Oral Questions

can count on a member who will not be stuck on the opposition benches, but will be able to act in their interests.

The nation of Quebec knows that it is impossible to score when you are a spectator. My victory belongs to the Conservative team and to a certain Albertan who has demonstrated openness and leadership. For the past 20 months, the Prime Minister of Canada has been putting words into action, keeping his word and delivering the goods.

In the Speech from the Throne, we promised to take measures to support workers in the forestry industry and we will keep that promise. The Bloc opposes these measures and even thinks Ottawa is hindering Quebec's development. The opposite is true. The Bloc is a real political catastrophe that is hindering the economic development of the nation of Quebec within a strong and united Canada.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

ELECTIONS CANADA

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the last election campaign, the Conservative Party violated the Canada Elections Act. According to Elections Canada, \$1.2 million was diverted. Conservative Party executives knew about and were involved in the scheme. Today some of them are advisers, MPs and ministers.

And what about the Prime Minister? I am asking him in his capacity as the Leader of the Conservative Party and Prime Minister: what did he know and when did he know it?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I guess the Leader of the Opposition did not hear my answers yesterday for some reason. In any event, our election financing activities are entirely legal. They are what the law permits and they are similar to the practices of other political parties.

•(1420)

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's closest advisers are implicated in this scheme. How can he pretend and say to Canadians that he was not aware of this unethical and illegal behaviour?

I will give him another chance to answer. What did he know about it and when did he know it?

Oral Questions

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely nothing to the suggestions of the Leader of the Opposition. I said it before and I will say it again. Our election financing activities are entirely legal. They follow the law. They are similar to those of the other political parties.

[Translation]

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have the right to be given an answer by the Prime Minister. That is their right. He cannot remain sitting; he must reply. His advisers knew about it. What did he know? Was he responsible for any decision? Was it his decision to violate the Canada Elections Act?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we just had an outstanding throne speech that set the course for the future. Apparently that is of no interest to the Liberal Party. It explains why when he became the leader of the Liberal Party, headquarters replaced the sign that said “smile” with the new sign that said “smile anyway”.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government spent the summer sidestepping allegations of election irregularities hoping to avoid parliamentary scrutiny. Not so fast. Their conduct has been called into question by independent organizations. They are under investigation not in one, not in two, but in three separate cases.

Clearly, the party opposite wants to sweep all of this under the rug so Canadians do not get the facts. But is this the real reason why the Prime Minister wants to go into an early election?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. This party does not want to go into an early election. We wish to govern.

We will be seeking a mandate from this House to govern until October 19, 2009. That is the date we set in law for the next election, and we are confident that this House will give us that mandate next Wednesday.

[Translation]

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are presently the subject of three independent investigations for serious ethics breaches. Is that why they want an election? To sweep it all under the rug?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all our activities are entirely legal. I have said that repeatedly.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I am sure the government House leader appreciates this help with his answer, but he has the floor and so he has the right to speak, and others perhaps can allow him to continue so we can all hear the answer.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, all our activities are entirely legal. We have nothing to apologize for.

When it came to questions of ethics, the electorate rendered a strong verdict in the last election. They said that they had had it with the Liberals' ways on ethics.

* * *

[Translation]

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in a speech given in Quebec City in December 2005, the Prime Minister promised to respect Quebec's jurisdictions. However, in his throne speech, the Prime Minister promised to limit the use of federal spending power only for new cost-shared programs.

Does this mean that the Prime Minister will continue to interfere as much as he likes in Quebec's jurisdictions, as long as the costs are not shared, as he did by creating the Mental Health Commission?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the activities of the Mental Health Commission fall under federal jurisdiction. We are working with several provinces on this activity and the people who work in the field have welcomed this federal government initiative.

● (1425)

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Quebec does not share that opinion. There are hardly any cost-shared agreements left. This therefore allows the federal government to interfere whenever and however it pleases.

Furthermore, the social union, unanimously denounced by the National Assembly, allowed for the right to opt out with 100% of the funds, although the throne speech referred instead to “reasonable compensation”.

Are we to understand that the social union, unanimously rejected by Quebec, offered more than the Prime Minister's Speech from the Throne, even though he has promised to correct the fiscal imbalance, limit the use of federal spending power and respect Quebec's jurisdictions?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Quebec welcomes the federal government's intention to limit the use of federal spending power in shared jurisdictions. This is a historic triumph for Quebec. The Bloc Québécois is simply unable to recognize this, because of its separatist ideology.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government claims that its plan to limit federal spending power is better than the social union. In the throne speech, as in the social union, the federal government imposes conditions for Quebec's opting out if it meddles in its areas of jurisdiction. According to the social union, Quebec must invest in related areas if it is to be compensated. According to the Conservatives' plan, it must invest in compatible programs.

Can the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs explain the difference between the terms “compatible” and “related” in this context, if not that the Conservative plan is much more restrictive than the social union, which was unanimously rejected by the National Assembly?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would ask our Bloc Québécois friends to be patient. This government will table a bill and, at that time, they will learn the details. After we have shared the bill with all members, they will be in a position to ask appropriate questions.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, does the Prime Minister realize that not only does his plan fall short of the social union rejected by Quebec but also, that if he does not eliminate federal spending power, he will have definitely broken the promise made to Quebec in December 2005 to correct the fiscal imbalance?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two things to say. First, we will recall that the Bloc Québécois voted with the government to solve the fiscal imbalance.

Second, once again, Quebecers know very well that when this government gives its word and promises to do something, it will happen.

* * *

SENATE OF CANADA

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): On the contrary, Mr. Speaker, far too often the Prime Minister says one thing and does another.

I will give an example. On January 12, 2006, the Prime Minister said on CBC that cabinet should consist only of elected members. Just a few days later he appointed Michael Fortier to the Senate and to the government's cabinet. Yesterday he said he thinks that, perhaps, the Senate should be abolished. We agree.

Why should we believe the Prime Minister this time?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I very clearly said that this party's preference is to see a reformed and elected Senate, but the Senate must change; if the Senate cannot be elected, then it should be abolished. Those are the choices. The New Democratic Party has made its choice.

It cannot reject the idea of having an election and then ask that senators be elected. That is a contradiction.

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it looks as though the only way that we are going to get Michael Fortier to face the voters is to abolish the Senate.

Let me quote the Prime Minister once again when he said, “An appointed Senate is a relic of the 19th century.”

Many provincial leaders in this country support the abolition of the Senate. So, let me ask the Prime Minister seriously, is he willing to open up a dialogue with provincial leaders regarding the steps that

would need to be taken to abolish the Senate? If it is broken, let us abolish it now.

• (1430)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, this party's preference has always been to see a reformed and elected Senate, but if the Senate cannot be reformed, the only other alternative would be to abolish it. I think we recognize that.

Once again the leader of the New Democratic Party is in a bit of a contradiction. He cannot blame the Senate for having unelected senators when he himself refuses to pass legislation to allow senators to be elected.

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ELECTIONS CANADA

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Elections Canada investigated this \$1.2 million Conservative Party laundering scam.

There is no evidence these expenses were incurred by their candidates. Some of their candidates said they did not even know about them. Others said they were pressured to contribute to the national advertising.

Elections Canada says that the Conservative Party used local campaigns to hide the fact that they spent more than they were allowed to and then they had the gall to claim bogus rebates.

When will the government admit that it knowingly broke the law?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all of the suggestions of the hon. member are in fact incorrect. The reality is that all of our activities are lawful. We follow the law very carefully and we will continue to do that in the future.

[Translation]

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is not the opinion of Elections Canada.

The Prime Minister has to explain himself. Ann O'Grady, the official agent of the Conservative Party, knew that. His campaign manager, Tom Flanagan, knew that. He even wrote about it in his book.

These people get their mandate from the Prime Minister. He is the one who tells them what to do. Why did the Prime Minister tell them to violate the election financing legislation?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has made some very serious accusations of illegal activity by particular individuals. I have not heard her make those accusations outside the House. I would invite her to do so and bear the consequences of doing so.

[Translation]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, even Conservative candidates feel the need to admit that they cheated during the last election.

Oral Questions

Gary Caldwell, the candidate for Compton—Stanstead admitted, and I quote, “It was not a legitimate expense in our riding”.

Jean Landry, the candidate for Richmond—Arthabaska, said that a Conservative organizer, and I quote, “did not stop bugging him about it. He said he had to take it and that was that.”

Why does the Prime Minister not come forward, as his candidates have done? Why is he hiding the truth?

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely nothing hidden. All of our activities are legal. All of them follow the letter of the law and all of them are similar to the practices of other parties.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us be very clear. Gary Caldwell, who was the Conservative candidate in Compton—Stanstead, said that this “was not a legitimate expense in our riding”. Jean Landry, another Conservative candidate said that a party organizer, and I quote, “did not stop harassing me with that. He said we had to do it, that it was obligatory”.

Who is telling the truth, the Prime Minister or his candidates?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I heard the hon. member the first time. I do not think he heard me the 12th time.

All of our activities were legal. They followed the letter of the law and were similar to the practices of other parties.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec is not Quebec without its regions. But these regions are losing their families, who are in search of work and decent wages. Jobs are being lost by the thousands. Today yet another factory, Louisiana Pacific Canada Ltd., shut down. More than 200 people lost their jobs in Saint-Michel-des-Saints, in Lanaudière.

Will the government finally implement the measures suggested by the Bloc Québécois, which is proposing a tax credit equal to 30% of the increase in payroll for companies doing value-added processing, and a tax break equal to 50% of the income tax of SME manufacturers in resource regions?

• (1435)

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously we must keep in mind that these things reflect the global situation. It is no secret that some sectors of economic activity are suffering. However, the economy is booming in other sectors.

In the Speech from the Throne, which the Bloc opposes, we clearly indicated that we planned on taking steps to help the manufacturing sector, the tourism sector and the forestry sector. It is unfortunate that the Bloc Québécois opposes the speech.

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the minister said, there was no mention of help for the forest industry to get back on its feet or for economic diversification in the throne speech. The \$14 billion dollar surplus is being put towards the debt, while families are losing everything.

When will this government show some compassion and take action?

[*English*]

Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact, our government in the last year and a half has committed \$400 million to the forest sector. We have done everything to worker adjustment programs and we have invested in new markets. All of this is being done with the Forest Products Association of Canada, which represents most of this industry. No other government has stood by this industry.

Again, as the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities has said, there are no measures for the forest sector in the throne speech. It was not mentioned. It is very unfortunate that the Bloc will not stand up for the forest sector in Quebec or anywhere else in Canada. It should support the throne speech.

* * *

[*Translation*]

OLDER WORKERS

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the throne speech also has nothing for older workers affected by the crisis in the forest industry. It is ridiculous to think that all workers over 55 can be retrained, regardless of their level of education and where they come from. What we need is a real income support program to help these workers until they retire. Such a program would cost only \$75 million.

How can the government, which is sitting on a \$14 billion surplus, tell these workers that it will not provide them with an income support program, when they have run out of job opportunities?

[*English*]

Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the throne speech we did talk about the need to support the forestry sector and other sectors that have been hit hard by layoffs. I point out that today we have nine different initiatives underway in Quebec under the targeted initiative for older workers, an initiative that the government brought in, with the support of the Bloc Québécois.

The fact is we are putting many supports in place to help people who are hard hit by layoffs in all sectors across the country.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is not income support. What is even worse, the Conservatives are refusing to give a royal recommendation to Bill C-269, which makes improvements to the employment insurance system. This recommendation is possible because there was a precedent that concerned an unemployment insurance bill.

Will the minister give these workers back their dignity by authorizing the royal recommendation to Bill C-269, as was done for Bill C-216 in 1994?

[English]

Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government feels that those workers have dignity and it is not up to this government to give that dignity to them. We have tremendous faith in the people of Quebec. That is why we put in place the targeted initiative for older workers. We see the tremendous potential in these workers. We are dedicated to helping them. I just wish the member had that same faith.

* * *

HOLIDAY GREETINGS

Mrs. Susan Kadis (Thornhill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us not forget there is a third investigation underway. This one involves the Prime Minister's Office and a breach of privacy, an allegation that should send chills down the spines of all Canadians.

My constituents, Mrs. Faulkner and Mrs. Donin, want an explanation. Both of their names mysteriously appeared on the PMO list to receive a Rosh Hashanah greeting, but neither is Jewish. They want to know how they were identified with a religious affiliation they do not hold and why there is such a list.

Calls to the PMO went unanswered, so today I ask the Prime Minister again if he will explain how his office compiled the lists?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to hear that she did not enter into the happiness of the Rosh Hashanah new year, but I can quote from the executive vice-president of the Canadian Jewish Congress, who said, "I don't think there is anything nefarious here whatsoever" and that most people in the community would appreciate this.

Frank Dimant of B'nai Brith Canada said, "I really do think there's a very sinister motivation by individuals who are asking for an examination of where these lists came from or how they were accumulated". What is her sinister motivation?

Before she answers that, I would like her to tell us whether she has ever sent out Rosh Hashanah cards, or other Liberals have, to members of the Jewish community.

● (1440)

Mrs. Susan Kadis (Thornhill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect their privacy to be protected, not exploited.

The Prime Minister's Office has dodged calls on questions on this issue from my constituents. I have had to write a letter to the Privacy Commissioner at the request of one of my constituents for an answer, but they want to hear from the Prime Minister. How did their names

Oral Questions

get placed on the list? The PMO could not have received their names from public lists as they are not constituents of the Jewish faith.

How did the PMO access their private information? Will the Prime Minister explain how the list was compiled?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I understand why the member did not want to answer my question. Perhaps it is because this morning I received an email from a constituent of hers, Mr. Arthur Burke, and I would be happy to table this. It says:

Dear Sir:

I received a Rosh Hashanah card from my MP, [the MP for Thornhill]. I don't know from where she received my address or how she knew my religious affiliation. I would be very appreciative if you might be able to look into this

We know that Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish new year, but it seems for that member it is the high holiday for hypocrisy.

Hon. Garth Turner (Halton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Secretary of State for—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I know members on both sides seem to disagree on this point, but we have to have some order in the House so we can proceed with the discussion.

The hon. member for Halton has the floor now.

Hon. Garth Turner: Mr. Speaker, now that the Secretary of State (Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity) has admitted that the government used private information to send unsolicited mail to Canadians, will he now apologize and, better still, tell us where that information came from? Are Conservative members of Parliament collecting that from their constituents, yes or no?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity), CPC): Mr. Speaker, that proves once again that those members cannot think on their feet or retool during question period.

The fact is, like all members of Parliament, we have a program to provide holiday greetings. Most MPs perhaps over there only do it at Christmastime, but because we believe in multiculturalism we share holiday greetings on important festivities for all communities based on publicly available lists of information.

Those members should be apologizing for saying one thing and doing another.

Hon. Garth Turner (Halton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are here to represent people. We are in our ridings to serve people.

Conservative members of Parliament have a party database in their offices in which is entered the private information of individual Canadians. Now he has just admitted that it is used.

Oral Questions

Will the Prime Minister apologize for an unethical invasion of Canadians' privacy?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Halton has always said that ethics are very important to him.

He talks today about the importance of representing people, including the people of Halton. That is why he said on February 10, 2006, "I think anyone who crosses the floor should go back to the people for ratification". That is one of his ethical standards and I know he wants to follow that ethical standard today.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a good day for Calgarians. Today the Minister of Justice tabled a comprehensive justice bill which includes pieces of important crime fighting legislation held up in the last Parliament by the opposition.

Calgary Mayor Dave Bronconnier praised our initiatives saying:

Any time you can keep offenders—repeat offenders with serious crimes involving guns, as we've seen a number of instances in Calgary's case—by having more stringent criteria, we support it.

Today the Liberals have accused us of holding up our own legislation. Could the Minister of Justice respond to these outrageous accusations?

• (1445)

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the last year, the Liberal Party has held up or been fighting our crime fighting agenda. Now it has spun this very interesting theory that we were just trying to make it look bad by not passing the legislation. We can agree on a lot of things and one of the things we can agree on for sure is that the Liberal Party has needed no help whatsoever in the last year to look bad.

We will continue to stand up for the rights of law-abiding Canadians.

* * *

AFGHANISTAN

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week the Prime Minister appointed a partisan panel to extend the mission in Afghanistan. Now we discover that John Manley is getting \$1,400 a day to support the Conservative position. However, the panel will not address the critical issue of injured soldiers and the support they need when they come home.

Military families are struggling to cope. Many of them are unable to access the support services they need.

Why do the Conservatives want to extend this war when they cannot even help military families here at home?

[Translation]

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud that the chair finally agreed to sit on this panel. I can tell you and the entire House that the chair of the panel

will be paid the government fees we traditionally pay and will not receive any special treatment.

[English]

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the only reason we are still in this war is because Liberals supported the Conservatives to extend it.

On top of what this panel is paid, released documents now show that the government is spending \$86 million a month on this war. Meanwhile, I have received many heartbreaking letters from military families across the country saying they cannot access the support services they need.

How can the minister justify spending \$86 million a month on a war Canadians do not support? How can he justify paying John Manley \$1,400 a day?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, why we are there is a very important question which I want to answer.

The UN on September 19 issued resolution 1776 and called upon member states to contribute personnel, equipment and other resources to the International Security Assistance Forces in Afghanistan. We are there because it is under a UN mandate.

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GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the government was asked yesterday if it was involved in a bribery scheme during the Ottawa mayoralty race, the government House leader said, "the minister was approached with the suggestion of an offer".

It begs this question. What offer was made to which minister and by whom? Was it John Reynolds? Was it Doug Finley? Just who was it?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this stuff is all in the open.

There was no offer ever made and there was no appointment ever made. It is only the Liberal Party of Canada that would consider the failure to make a patronage appointment a scandal.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve better answers than that.

In an affidavit, Detective Sergeant Mason said that Ottawa Mayor O'Brien asked his political rival, Terry Kilrea, to vacate the mayor's race if O'Brien could make an appointment happen. Hours later, Kilrea said that he got a call from O'Brien saying that John Reynolds had place his name on the list.

Yesterday the minister admitted the government was indeed approached with an offer. Clearly making such an offer is against the law, in case he forgot.

Who in the government or in the Conservative Party made this offer?

Oral Questions

●(1450)

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think it is a matter of public record.

Terry Kilrea, the individual in question, approached the Minister of the Environment to see if an offer had been extended or made, and none had. He made that quite clear.

I think the one person who could have made that offer in the past might have been the mayor in question, back in the days when he was the president of the Liberal fundraising organization, the Laurier Club.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is Persons Day and once again the Prime Minister continues to attack women's equality.

The Prime Minister broke his promise from the 2006 election campaign to take concrete and immediate measures, as recommended by the United Nations, to ensure that Canada fully upheld its commitments to women in Canada.

Could the Prime Minister please explain how by silencing the voices of women improves Canada's commitment to women's equality?

[Translation]

Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the member has just said is completely untrue. She knows quite well that our government increased funding for the women's program to its highest level, a 42% increase, and the member voted against it.

[English]

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was women's voices that gave women the vote in Canada and declared them persons under the law, and it was women's voices that forced the Government of Canada to include women in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Women's groups that advocate for change are now excluded from applying for funding, but the Conference of Defence Associations, the oldest advocacy group in Canada's defence community, received a \$500,000 multi-year grant. Why are defence contractors eligible for advocacy funding when women's groups are not? This is a disgrace for the government.

[Translation]

Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nothing is further from the truth and that is shameful.

Just recently, I gave a grant to the Actu-Elle organization, which provides opportunities and tools to help women achieve economic independence. In addition, about 60 other projects will be announced over the course of the next few weeks with a total allocation of \$8 million.

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, women do not need charity; they need real programs.

The throne speech is a slap in the face for women. It makes no mention of pay equity or improving the economic security of women.

Can the minister, who says she is connected to women's reality in Quebec, explain why there are no measures for women and no pay equity legislation announced in the throne speech? That is not what I would call connected.

Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this summer we all read about how the members of the Bloc Québécois decided that they would be more aggressive. However, that is no reason to spread falsehoods. The reality is that our government increased the grants to women's programs by 42%, making it the largest budget ever for the program that provides direct assistance to women, thus much less bureaucracy and more tangible results for women.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how can anyone support this government, which has abandoned more than 52% of its citizens, namely, women?

Women's groups are calling the Conservative government's record, when it comes to defending the rights of women, nothing short of disastrous. Women are angry at this government, and with good reason.

Will the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages ever come down from her ivory tower and really understand, at ground level, the reality facing women, and finally restore the original criteria of the women's program and the court challenges program?

Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not need the hon. member's comments and suggestions to understand the needs of women in Quebec. If the member would truly like to contribute to the advancement of women in Quebec, I would invite her to start by enlightening her colleague from Brome—Missisquoi, who made some inappropriate comments following my appointment as Minister of Canadian Heritage.

That said, the budget for women's programs has been increased by 42% and \$15.3 million has been invested to achieve concrete results for women in need.

* * *

●(1455)

[English]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the Vancouver International Airport on Sunday, a visitor from Poland tragically died after RCMP officers jolted him with a taser.

This is not the only incident. Last night a Montreal man was also killed by a taser.

Oral Questions

Canadians need answers. They need reassurance that the use of tasers is not routine procedure. Will the government ensure that the RCMP follow clear, proper procedures for restraint and that taser use does not continue to result in such fatalities?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, certainly any incident that ends in tragedy has our full condolences.

I would also say that the RCMP is right now in the midst of doing a review for me on the use of taser. I understand the Canadian Police Association is also doing that.

Since 2001 tasers have been used by the RCMP about 4,000 times and at least as many times by other police associations. The training is very intensive.

We are looking forward to getting the updated reviews to see what those have reported.

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THE ARCTIC

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to helping the Arctic finally realize its true potential after years of neglect by our Liberal colleagues. Under our government's leadership, we are strengthening Canada's sovereignty and place in the world.

Could the Minister of Foreign Affairs explain what action our government is taking to protect our country's sovereignty, specifically in the north?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as part of asserting sovereignty in the Arctic our government will complete a comprehensive mapping of Canada's Arctic seabed. Never before has this part of Canada's ocean floor been fully mapped.

New Arctic patrol ships and expanded surveillance will guard Canada's far north and our Arctic Rangers will also be expanded.

The opposition can only talk and always talks about protecting sovereignty, but the fact is that they did not get it done.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives continue to play dangerous games when it comes to our environment. The watered down half measures of the government will do nothing to fight dangerous climate change.

New Democrats will again show what it means to act on our principles and fight for a progressive environmental agenda for working families.

Will the minister explain to this House why the government insists on thumbing its nose at the hard work of this Parliament and why his government refuses to bring back the clean air and climate change act for a vote in this place?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, very simply, the amendments made by the opposition parties to the old clean air act simply created an unlimited licence to

pollute. That is not acceptable for those of us on the government side of the House.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the huckster keeps selling it but Canadians ain't buying, and now, tragically, because of Liberal support for this agenda, it seems the Liberal leader will have to rename his dog. It is a shame.

I was in Washington recently. I met with senators, both Republicans and Democrats, who are fighting for serious climate change action in their governments. If politicians in George Bush's America have the courage to act, why is it that the Liberal and Conservative MPs do not have that same courage? Do they want to pass on this dangerous agenda to future generations?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am a Canadian nationalist. I am not going to be taking my orders from the U.S. Congress, from Democrats or Republicans. Our policy is going to be made in Canada policy.

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[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Saul Itzhayek, a Canadian citizen in my riding, Mount Royal, has been rotting in a prison in India for the past five months.

● (1500)

[English]

I spoke with Saul from his squalid prison cell, who advised me that he has been sentenced to three years for an alleged visa violation resulting from entrapment by Indian officials and has not received the needed consular assistance.

Will the Canadian government take the requisite steps to assist and expedite the return of a Canadian citizen to Canada and his family?

Hon. Helena Guergis (Secretary of State (Foreign Affairs and International Trade) (Sport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely aware of this issue. In fact, I have been in regular contact through correspondence on Mr. Itzhayek's case with the critic for the Liberal Party. I can assure the hon. member that consular affairs has been in regular contact with him, with his family and with his lawyer. We have ensured that he is provided the consular services he is entitled to.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in budget 2007, our government took action to improve the water we drink, clean polluted waters, help maintain water levels in the Great Lakes, protect our ecosystems, and ensure the sustainability of our fish resources. In fact, just last week I was with the Minister of the Environment and the government House leader when they announced \$12 million for the cleanup of Lake Simcoe in central Ontario.

I would like to ask the Minister of the Environment if he could tell the House what additional actions our government has taken to protect our precious rivers, lakes and oceans.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is taking real action on environmental remediation to help clean our waters.

It was the Liberal Party that voted against funding to help support Lake Simcoe and the cleanup there. I know the member was as shocked as I was and the next time we go to Lake Simcoe we will invite the member for Wascana.

We are also putting major resources into cleaning up our oceans and our Great Lakes. For the first time ever, we are going to be banning raw sewage from being dumped into Canada's oceans, rivers and lakes. The previous government did not get it done. This government is delivering real results for the environment.

* * *

EQUALIZATION PAYMENTS

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I just sent to the Minister of Finance a chart of the projections prepared by the Government of Nova Scotia relating to its interpretation of how much money it will get out of the new exchange of letters. Will the minister confirm that the provincial chart I just sent him is the same as the federal projections?

Also, the exchange of letters says the amendments to legislation will be made but they do not say what legislation will be amended. Will the minister tell us what legislation will be amended as a result of the exchange of letters?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the agreement that has been reached between the Province of Nova Scotia and the Government of Canada has been overwhelmingly positive in the response. The specifics the member is referring to will be made public.

The reality is that much of these charts, these projections, are based on assumptions. We do know that the legislation that has to be amended will include the Budget Implementation Act. Currently there are discussions happening between the province and Ottawa.

I just want to quote for the record what the Premier of Nova Scotia says. He is satisfied that the federal government will follow through with its promise and introduce legislation to implement the changes. Former Premier Hamm also said last week that it “fits very nicely with the original accord”. This is a positive outcome.

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CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley is standing up for his constituents and for Nova Scotia.

The Prime Minister, in 2005, said that parachuting candidates into a local riding association against the wishes of that riding association “demeans...democracy”.

Business of the House

The riding association of Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley has nominated and reaffirmed the nomination of the member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley.

How can the Prime Minister be taken seriously on democratic reform when his own actions, according to his own words, demean democracy?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always amusing to have a Liberal talk about democracy in his party. That is the party that championed the notion of candidates being appointed over the objections of local riding associations.

I cannot understand how this is a matter of government business, but let me tell members that the Conservative Party national council is dealing with the matter in the appropriate fashion in the interests of the Conservative Party membership.

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●(1505)

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of His Excellency Degefe Bula, the Speaker of the House of the Federation of the Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two questions actually related to House business, one arising from the question period that we have just finished. During question period the Secretary of State for Multiculturalism quoted specifically from his BlackBerry.

There is a tradition of this House that material that is directly quoted from needs to be tabled in this House of Commons. I would ask the government House leader to ensure that the BlackBerry of the hon. Secretary of State for Multiculturalism be tabled forthwith.

Second, I wonder with respect to the work of the House whether the government House leader could indicate his plans for the rest of this week and all of next week, including Friday, which up to today remains an unspecified business day. What we will be doing all of this week, next week and Friday of next week specifically? And if he also could be kind enough to indicate to us what his general plan would be for the following week that would take us to the Remembrance Day break.

Hon. Jason Kenney (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I see that the opposition House leader continues to have a particular fascination with my BlackBerry. I think this is the second time he has asked me to table an electronic device.

I know he still in many respects lives in the 19th century, but most members actually use the BlackBerry as a device for informative purposes. I am happy to table a printout of the document from which I was reading.

Privilege

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the remainder of the week and throughout next week the government will continue to build a better Canada for all of us by debating and ultimately voting on the Speech from the Throne.

We are calling this a mandate to govern week. Canada's greatest strength lies in its ideas and its energy, and its determination to move forward and build a better future.

[*Translation*]

Our government is committed to showing strong leadership to guarantee our future. We will debate our ideas for a Canada that is proud of its place in the world and that faces its economic future confidently; a Canada founded on a solid federation and a strong democracy; a Canada that is a safe place for families and a healthy place for children.

[*English*]

To move forward on these priorities the government will devote each day of debate on the throne speech to the five core priorities outlined in it.

Today the government is debating our plan to tackle violent crime and strength the security of Canadians. We kicked off debate by introducing the tackling violent crime act which will combine justice bills from the last session of Parliament into one single, comprehensive bill.

The bill demonstrates that our government is serious about the need to better protect youth from sexual predators, to protect our communities from dangerous offenders, get serious with drug impaired drivers, and toughen sentencing and bail for those who commit serious gun crimes. We hope the opposition does not attempt to obstruct and delay this legislation as it did with justice bills during the last session.

Tomorrow will be about strengthening Canada's sovereignty and place in the world. Government members will provide the House with a plan that will reflect the government's resolve to protect our sovereignty and our rich heritage.

Monday will be devoted to strengthening the federation and our democratic institutions, to ensure that our institutions reflect the shared commitment of Canadians to democracy.

On Tuesday we will highlight to Canadians how our government is providing effective economic leadership which will lead to a prosperous future.

We will devote Wednesday, the last day of debate on the throne speech, to improving the environment and health of Canadians.

Finally, Thursday, October 25 will be an allotted day.

As for the period of time after that, we have yet to schedule that. We of course have been awaiting further indications of what we would have at the end of the throne speech and we know it took a long time to get a sense from the opposition on where it was going, until approximately 4 p.m. yesterday.

• (1510)

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of a question of privilege from the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley. I will hear from the hon. member now.

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PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED IMPEDIMENT IN THE DISCHARGE OF A MEMBER'S DUTIES

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank you for finding an appropriate time to hear this question of privilege in what has been a very busy week for us all.

I raise this question of privilege today at the insistence and urging of my constituents as well as people from across British Columbia and Canada who feel an important principle of democracy has been trodden upon. It is not about politics, but the principle of this matter. I will not be quoting any politicians today, but rather everyday Canadians who have written on this issue.

Specifically, it is my contention that my ability to properly function as the duly elected member of Parliament for Skeena—Bulkley Valley has been deliberately obstructed by the member for Cariboo—Prince George.

On August 21, the member for Cariboo—Prince George issued a press release which stated:

[The] MP for Cariboo—Prince George has named Houston Mayor and Conservative candidate Sharon Smith as the person that residents of Skeena—Bulkley Valley can contact when they have concerns or issues with the federal government...I and other BC Conservative MPs will work closely with Sharon Smith as she represents constituents of her riding to the government members. It will be a bonus for people of Skeena—Bulkley Valley to have direct representation to the government on so many issues.

This is a direct quote from the press release, Mr. Speaker.

The member then went on to give a number of interviews to the press, the transcripts of which I have previously forwarded to you. I believe that when you review the original press releases as well as those transcripts, that you will find that the member for Cariboo—Prince George was intentionally informing the media, and through them my constituents, that someone else was the de facto member of Parliament for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

It is my contention that this is an obstruction of my ability to do the job that my constituents elected me to do in the last election.

Mr. Speaker, I draw your attention to page 87 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* by Marleau and Montpetit which quotes Speaker Bosley, from May 6, 1985, saying:

"It should go without saying that a Member of Parliament needs to perform his functions effectively and that anything tending to cause confusion as to a Member's identity creates the possibility of an impediment to the fulfilment of that Member's functions. Any action which impedes or tends to impede a Member in the discharge of his duties is a breach of privilege. There are ample citations and precedents to bear this out".

On page 69 of the Twenty-first Edition of *Erskine May's Treatise on The Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament* it says:

Privilege

Each House also claims the right to punish as contempts actions which, while not breaches of any specific privilege, obstruct or impede it in the performance of its functions, or are offences against its authority or dignity, such as disobedience to its legitimate commands or libels upon itself, its Members or its officers.

I highlight this passage because I believe the deliberate actions of the member for Cariboo—Prince George in fact obstructed and impeded the performance of my functions as a member of the House.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, I have been strongly urged to seek this ruling by my constituents and indeed by ordinary Canadians from across the country who feel personally affronted by the actions of this member.

Harry Bradley of Toronto wrote:

I am outraged at the recent attempts made by the [member for Cariboo—Prince George] to usurp your power as elected MP of Skeena—Bulkley Valley. It is insulting to you and it is insulting to the constituents who democratically elected you. I wish you luck in the complaint process. You have my full support.

Mr. Ken Smith of New Hazelton, a small community in my riding, copied me on a letter he wrote to the Ethics Commissioner:

The appointment of a Conservative candidate in Skeena—Bulkley Valley riding is both undemocratic and the most blatant example of a conflict of interest I have ever seen. [The member from Skeena—Bulkley Valley] was elected by the people of this riding and as our representative—

Finally, Ashley Morton of St. John's, Newfoundland wrote in regard to the member:

I am a member of his party...There is no question in my mind that you are to be commended for your tremendously high volume and quality of work on behalf of the residents of the riding, and that my party has only made itself look at best ridiculous, and at worst corrupt, through his words.

These are only three of dozens and dozens of emails and letters that we have received from people right across British Columbia in my riding and from across Canada over the past several months, all of which have denounced the actions of the member for Cariboo—Prince George.

Just today in the halls, I met with constituents from my riding who obviously are familiar with this incident and familiar with the case. They are not voters of mine, they voted for another party, but who have urged me to defend the principles of democracy.

• (1515)

We have a duty to uphold the integrity and principles of this House on behalf of the people of Canada, who we all represent. We have a duty to represent and defend the principles of democracy in this place.

Once elected, we represent all of the constituents that come from our individual ridings regardless of their political affiliations, bias or vote. It is important for us to all remember that when the campaign ends, we all work on behalf of the people we represent in our communities right across this great country.

This is not a government for Conservatives. This is a government on behalf of Canadians. I think at times, in the to and fro of debate, parties forget this. Governments consistently forget this. While we might disagree on particular issues, and I think healthy debate is constructive and important for our thriving democracy, we cannot disagree on the one principle that each of us, in representing our constituents from across this country, have the right and duty to represent them fairly and have no right whatsoever to attempt to

confuse who the elected and right representative is of constituents who are occupying another riding.

I feel that I have accurately described the situation and the impacts of the deliberate actions of the member of Parliament for Cariboo—Prince George, who intentionally confused my constituents and undermined an election.

Mr. Speaker, should you find a prima facie case of privilege, I am prepared to move the appropriate motion at this time. I move that the matter of the comments made by the member for Cariboo—Prince George be referred to the Standing Committee in Procedure and House Affairs as a question of privilege, and that the committee inform the House of any decisions made by the committee in this manner.

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was, at best, interesting. The member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley in fact has been on somewhat of a tirade for a number of months now claiming that helping constituents that live in his riding who have been unable to get help from him is somehow unethical.

I would like to remind the House and the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley that prior to the 2004 constituency realignment half of his present riding was in my riding of Prince George—Bulkley Valley.

In the years that I served that riding, well I might add, I set a level of service to the constituents of the riding of Prince George—Bulkley Valley out as far as half of his riding that it is obvious he has not been able to follow. Over the last three years I have had an increasing number of constituents from Vanderhoof out to just about Smithers and beyond calling my office, asking for help from my office on issues that they could not get solved by their own MP.

I would like to say that I have responded to constituents from many ridings across the country, even here in Ottawa, who have not been able to get help from their MPs. I say that I am willing to help any taxpayer of this country, in any riding of this country, if his or her MP cannot or is unwilling to help. That is what I am elected for. That is what the taxpayers pay me for.

This grand stretch that the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley is trying to use to say it is somehow unethical to help constituents in this country, wherever they are, if they cannot get it from their own MP is kind of surprising.

Might I add, he has also gone to the Ethics Commissioner. I have to ask, what is he trying to do? Is he trying to somehow undermine the job of the Ethics Commissioner, who he has already contacted regarding this? The Ethics Commissioner is in the middle of making a decision, but that is not good enough for this protester from Terrace.

May I take the time to thank the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley for all of the publicity that he has given this. Since he started this summer, the calls to my riding from people in his riding who cannot get help from him have increased. I want to thank him. Also, the stature of the person who I appointed as a volunteer in his riding to refer people to me if they need help has gone way up because of the rantings of the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Privilege

I want to close by saying that I reject completely the premise of the member's rantings. Why does he not just let the Ethics Commissioner do her job? If he would just sit tight, I am sure at the end of the day the Ethics Commissioner is going to come down on the side that it is in fact ethical to help somebody in a riding if that person cannot get help from his or her own MP.

• (1520)

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as members of Parliament, I am sure that we all from time to time receive complaints, founded or unfounded, about the helpfulness or unhelpfulness of other MPs in the House. That is a normal part of the political process.

However, I think the issue that is being raised here today is different from that. I would encourage you, Mr. Speaker, to take this issue seriously because it appears to be more than just a political complaint or grievance of one party against another or one MP against another. It seems what may have happened in this case is that people in a certain riding represented by the NDP member across the way were encouraged not to deal with their elected member of Parliament but rather to deal with a partisan Conservative Party appointee.

It is one thing to have a grievance about whether or not one is well served by another member of Parliament but it is quite a different thing when a political party in a riding that has a duly elected member of Parliament appoints a person to ostensibly represent the government and then delivers the message to the constituents of that riding that if he or she deals with the partisan appointee—

An hon. member: Unelected operative.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: —the unelected operative, one will get service but, if one does not deal with the appointee of the Conservative Party, somehow there will be a punishment. That is the problem in this case and it does appear on the surface to be a perversion of democracy.

This is not the only instance where the Conservative Party has tried this. There was a variation of it in the riding of Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River in Saskatchewan.

Rather than easily setting this aside as some kind of a partisan dispute between disgruntled members of Parliament, Mr. Speaker, I think there is a valid point here for you to consider this along the line of whether or not when a political party appoints an individual in a riding to be the party's representative and indeed the government's representative in that riding and suggests to the constituents who live there that if they deal with the partisan employee they will get action but if they deal with the duly elected member of Parliament they will not or they might even be punished, there is something wrong with that situation. It is a subversion of democracy and it is an insult to all members of the House of Commons.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to the hon. opposition House leader, I do agree with one point that he made, which is that from time to time constituents from various and outlying ridings do approach other MPs outside of their riding for assistance. I consistently get calls from members from the Regina Wascana constituency asking me for help.

However, beyond all that, I take umbrage, quite frankly, with a couple of the comments that the member opposite just made, one being his inference that this was a party sort of directed function. It was not. My colleague wanted to ensure that constituents in his former riding were able to get the level of service that they had come to expect when he was their representative. This was an initiative that he brought on thinking he was doing a favour and delivering a service to his former constituents. It was nothing more than that.

Mr. Speaker, I think the real thing that you need to examine in determining this point of privilege is whether in fact it is a point of privilege. The point of privilege only comes down to one thing: Was he, the NDP member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, who raised this point of privilege, or was his ability to do his job adversely affected. I would suggest that they were not.

If he can give any concrete examples of how his abilities and how his job as a member of Parliament were adversely affected by my colleague's suggestion that the level of service might be greatly enhanced by going to one of his colleagues, I certainly think there would be a case. However, I would suggest that his duties as a member of Parliament were in no way adversely affected. How could they be?

He has provided not one shred of evidence that his job as a member of Parliament was in fact compromised because of the comments by my colleague. That is the only consideration you should be giving this, Mr. Speaker. The rest, quite frankly, is nothing more than political grandstanding and window dressing.

• (1525)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just this past week I had a case in my constituency office requiring the urgent intervention by a minister to get a family member to come over to attend to a terminally ill child.

We wrote to the minister but we did not get a response within a reasonable period of time. We made the necessary inquiry. We were told directly that the department no longer responds to opposition members' requests for assistance and ministerial intervention.

If in fact the situation here is that there is another designate that will get the attention of the minister, who is not an elected person, what do we do in a riding like mine where there is no nominated candidate for the government party?

My privileges as a member of Parliament to get the services from ministerial staff on matters of urgency and compassion have been impinged upon because I have been told that they will no longer even consider our requests for a ministerial permit. This is standard practice. It is the right thing for us to do as parliamentarians. This is not a partisan issue but the government has made it a partisan issue. It has taken away the privileges, the rights, the responsibilities and the tools to discharge those responsibilities of members of Parliament by taking this political stance. Those are the examples.

Mr. Speaker, I would be prepared to table with you or in the House the full details of this case and the names and contacts of all the people who have indicated that information and I will testify in front of the procedure and House affairs committee if necessary to the veracity of the information being tabled.

The Address

The Speaker: I am concerned about hearing too many interventions on this point. The hon. whip of the Bloc Québécois.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I know that you do not want to hear from many members about this, but the matter raised by my NDP colleague is so serious that it deserves a thorough examination on your part, and I am confident that you will examine it. We think that this was a breach of members' privileges that should be examined in greater detail by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

I would like to point out that this is becoming common practice for the Conservative government. I would like to provide an example that we are currently documenting. We intend to report on this to the House in due time.

I am talking about the unelected senator, Michael Fortier, Minister of Public Works, who, it seems, is going to be a candidate in the riding of Vaudreuil. He appears to think that this riding is his, that he represents it. He opened an office there and is using the House of Commons logo on his website even though he is not an elected member.

I would refer you to this morning's press conference during which the government announced its omnibus bill. Mr. Fortier talked about the riding of Vaudreuil as though it were his own. On the contrary, I believe he is the senator for Rougemont, which is not even in the riding of Vaudreuil. At any rate, the riding of Vaudreuil belongs to the House of Commons, and the unelected senator, Michael Fortier, is using the same strategy.

Mr. Speaker, it is up to you to decide, but based on these reasons, I would suggest that you thoroughly examine the question of privilege raised by our NDP colleague and allow it so that our procedure committee can study it in depth.

• (1530)

The Speaker: I would like to thank all the hon. members who made submissions on this matter.

[*English*]

At this point I will take the matter under advisement. The comments that have been made I will examine carefully but I think we are getting a little beyond the original point in some of the submissions that are being made which is why I am not prepared to hear further ones at this stage.

There are two things here. I have doubts that this constitutes a question of privilege, I will say up front, but I will examine the material to see whether in fact there is some element of privilege involved in this case.

Obviously, what members say outside of the House the Chair has consistently ruled are not things that are subject to privilege in the House. So I bear that in mind too in looking at what was said in this case by members that was not said here in the Chamber because my jurisdiction is in some respects limited.

On the other hand, I hate to deprive the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs with an opportunity to examine witnesses on a question that I know would thrill the members of the

committee. Therefore, that is a matter for the committee and I cannot control its agenda either. I can send it something but if it chooses to do things on its own, that is its business.

I will look at the question that was raised by the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley and I will look at all the submissions that were made by hon. members.

[*Translation*]

I will get back to the House in due course.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

[*Translation*]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise and speak here today. This is my first opportunity to participate in a debate in this new session.

[*English*]

I will be splitting my time with the member for Nipissing—Timiskaming.

I read the throne speech with a great deal of interest. I think many people in this Chamber were waiting to hear what the government had to say. We found it quite interesting that the government dealt with justice. What is interesting is that the government says that it will immediately tackle violent crime and that it is the only party in the House that looks at getting tough on crime.

I have listened to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Justice and to his parliamentary secretary talk about how the opposition parties obstructed the Conservative criminal justice agenda in the last Parliament. I find it quite amusing but I am dismayed to think that any Canadian listening to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Justice, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice or any of those Conservatives elected to the House of Commons and some of the ones over in the Senate would actually believe that the opposition parties tried to obstruct the criminal justice agenda of the Conservative Party.

I would like to present a few facts before this House.

The Conservative government tabled 13 justice bills in the House of Commons from its first throne speech in 2006 following the 2006 election. When the Prime Minister prorogued the House this past summer, of those 13 bills, Her Majesty's official opposition, the Liberal Party of Canada, under the leadership of the hon. member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, supported, unconditionally, 10 of those 13 justice bills put forward by the Conservatives. It goes even further.

The Address

On October 26, 2006, the official opposition House leader, along with the then Liberal justice critic who is the member for London West and who is now the chair of the national Liberal caucus justice committee, made a formal public offer to the Conservative government to put our votes behind the Conservative votes in order to fast track the adoption at all stages of several of the government's bills. One of those bills included the age of consent legislation.

Had the Conservative government, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Justice and the Conservative members of Parliament accepted the Liberal offer on October 26, 2006 to fast track Bill C-22, the age of protection would have been 16 years.

The Conservatives refused to take us up on it. Not only did they refuse to take us up on it, they allowed Bill C-22 to sit on the order paper for 130 days after they first tabled it in the House. When did they finally table their motion to move second reading debate? They tabled it on October 30, 2006, four days after the Liberals made an offer to fast track that bill. It finally put a fire under their bushel and they finally tabled a motion to move it for debate at second reading. Once the debate at second reading was finished, it took 142 days before that Conservative government moved the vote at second reading of Bill C-22.

• (1535)

I would like to know whether the Minister of Justice, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, or the Prime Minister of Canada have explained to Canadians why the age of consent today is still 14, when it could have been 16 as of October 26, 2006. But that is not enough. They wanted to use that bill as a hammer against the opposition parties to try and paint the opposition parties in the minds of Canadians as being soft on crime and not caring about our children, as being willing to have our children preyed upon. They continued to delay that bill, so much so that the Liberals in March 2007 offered again to fast track that bill. Did the Conservatives take us up on it? No, they did not.

We then in desperation tabled an opposition motion that would have had Bill C-22, which raised the age of consent from 14 to 16, adopted at all stages. What was the response of the Conservative government which claims that it is interested in the safety of Canadians, in the safety of our children? The Conservatives obstructed our opposition motion. They used an arcane procedure in order to deem it unreceivable. They blocked speedy passage of their own bill. It is unconscionable.

Let us look at Bill C-32, the impaired driving act. That bill was brought in originally by the member for Mount Royal when he was the minister of justice and attorney general of Canada under the previous Liberal government. We went to an election. Unfortunately, the NDP colluded with the Conservatives, defeated the Liberal government and now we have the NDP gift to Canadians, a Conservative government.

The government finally re-tabled Bill C-32. When did the Conservatives do it? Did they do it at their first opportunity after the election when Parliament came back at the beginning of February 2006? No, they only tabled it again in the House on November 21, 2006, some 10 months later. Then they let it sit on the order paper for 77 days. They did not move second reading until February 6, 2007.

That was another bill which the Liberals offered to fast track. We saw it just sitting on the order paper. Anyone who knows anything about the procedural rules of the House of Commons knows that only the government can move its legislation from one stage to another. The opposition cannot do it. If the government does not move debate at second reading, it does not happen.

When the government finally moved debate at second reading, it was debated for a very brief period in the House. All the opposition parties were in agreement to get the bill into committee quickly. The bill went into committee. It only sat in committee for 20 days, and during those 20 days there was the Easter vacation. The committee sent the bill back to the House. It spent one day in the House at report stage and third reading and that is it. That is the bill we wanted to see law.

For reverse onus, it is the same darn thing. We offered twice to fast track the bill. We tried to fast track it by way of an opposition day motion. The Conservatives blocked their own bill.

When the Conservatives appear on camera, when they hold press conferences, when they send out householders and when they target members of the opposition, in particular Liberal members, whether they be Liberals in Manitoba, in Nova Scotia or out in B.C., and say that the Liberals are soft on crime, it is nonsense.

• (1540)

The Conservatives blocked their own agenda, an agenda which was supported by the Liberals. If the age of consent is not 16 today, it is the fault of the Conservative government. It is the fault of every single Conservative member sitting there—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Sorry, but the time for debate has passed and the time for questions and comments has arrived. The hon. member for Abbotsford.

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully as my Liberal colleague misrepresented our anti-crime legislation.

If we ask Canadians across Canada whom they trust on the issue of crime, two-thirds of Canadians say it is the Conservatives. They like the Conservative crime agenda. They know we are getting tough on crime. They know we are getting things done.

It was interesting to listen to the Liberal leader's response to the throne speech. I also listened to the comments of a number of other Liberal MPs today in the House. The Liberal leader said that there were five of our six anti-crime bills that he actually supported. I listened to that member who said that she would love to fast track the legislation. Yet I listened to the member for Kitchener—Waterloo, also a Liberal MP, and what did he say earlier this morning? He said that it is neo-conservative crime legislation.

I want to know, does the member believe it is neo-conservative crime legislation? Does she support her leader? Would she be honest with Canadians and let them know what she really thinks about getting tough on crime?

The Address

• (1545)

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Speaker, I did not misrepresent any statement that I made about the Conservatives and their record on their own justice bills.

If we look at Bill C-10, for instance, it was tabled by the Conservatives for first reading on May 6, 2006. They waited 38 days before they moved second reading on June 13. The House adjourned shortly after that, came back at the beginning of September and they waited until November to move it into committee. The committee reported back to the House on February 21, 2007. The Conservatives left it on the order paper for 75 days before they moved to report stage. That was not the opposition. That was the Conservatives.

If we look at Bill C-22, the age of protection bill, they tabled it for first reading on June 22, 2006. They then left it on the order paper for 130 days. On October 26, 2006, the Liberals offered to fast track it. The Conservatives said no, but that put a fire under them and on October 30, they finally moved second reading.

That is a party and a government that has obstructed its own justice legislation for partisan reasons. Had the Conservatives cared about our children, they would have taken up the Liberal offer to fast track the legislation back in October 2006.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am having some trouble following the hon. member's logic.

She is obviously very much in support of the Conservative government's crime agenda and has gone to great pains to lay out all of her support for that agenda.

Clearly her party is supporting the throne speech, even though it goes the wrong way on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It is going to allow Canadian troops to stay on in a combat mission. It does nothing to help people who are falling further and further behind economically.

Clearly she and her caucus are all on the same page, the Liberals and the Conservatives, on all of these issues. Yet she is attacking the NDP at a time when the Liberals lost the confidence of Canadians because of scandals, corruption and the whole Gomery inquiry testimony that really exposed a lot of the weaknesses in the Liberal Party, and—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I will have to give the hon. member a brief moment to respond.

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting. The NDP supported Bill C-10, an act to establish escalator clauses for minimum mandatory penalties. The NDP supported it and agreed with escalator clauses. That is in the omnibus bill. The NDP supported Bill C-22, an act to increase the age of protection. That is in the omnibus bill. The NDP supported Bill C-32, the impaired driving act. That is in the omnibus bill. The NDP supported Bill C-35, which is in the omnibus bill—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Nipissing—Timiskaming.

Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to rise today on behalf of the people of Nipissing—Timiskaming and offer my response to the Conservative government's Speech from the Throne.

On Tuesday evening I listened intently to the Speech from the Throne, eager to hear what the Conservative government planned on doing to address issues of importance to the people of my riding.

Unlike members of the Bloc and the NDP, I felt that I owed it to my constituency to take the time necessary to assess the speech's impact on my constituents and indeed all Canadians before deciding how to proceed.

In the end, like most Canadians, I was extremely disappointed that the speech included very little to address climate change, provide social justice or enhance economic prosperity and competitiveness. Furthermore, I was deeply troubled by the fact that the speech contains little or no mention of priorities such as health care, research and development, or education. I had also hoped to see a commitment to infrastructure programs for our cities and communities as well as regional development programs such as FedNor. Once again these were conspicuously absent from the Conservative agenda. In short, the Conservative throne speech lacked vision and failed to address the issues that matter most to Canadians.

In the interest of making Parliament work and doing the job that we have been elected to do, my Liberal colleagues and I have proposed a series of amendments to find solutions to correct the shortcomings of the Conservatives' vague agenda. We are calling on the Conservative government to take greater action on climate change, to announce now the Canadian combat mission in Kandahar will end in February 2009—that is the combat mission—to fight against poverty in Canada, and to bring forth proposals to help build a stronger economy.

When the Conservatives took office in January 2006, they acquired the strongest economy in Canadian history. They had campaigned on a platform of fiscal discipline. Since that time the Conservative government has raised federal government spending by over \$25 billion. However, the average Canadian yet has to benefit from these expenditures.

Furthermore, the Conservatives recently announced a generous fiscal surplus. Yet they continue to make cuts to programs that have been proven effective and necessary tools in helping individuals and communities. The Conservatives have failed to address the five main priorities that they set out in 2006 in the Speech from the Throne. Now they have outlined five new priorities in the hopes that Canadians will not focus on the abysmal Conservative record over the past 21 months. Simply put, the current government is especially adept at being big on rhetoric and small on action.

The Address

The Prime Minister has demonstrated time and time again that he would much rather put good politics in front of good policy. For instance, let us take a closer look at the Conservatives' proposal to forge ahead with an additional cut to the GST. The cut is being made despite the fact that every serious economist in the country agrees that it is poor public policy and a misuse of about \$4.5 billion in federal fiscal flexibility every year.

The Conservatives would like to have us believe that the cut to the GST is beneficial to all Canadians. However, there is wide consensus that the Conservatives' tax cut plan would largely benefit higher income families over those who need it most: low and middle income families, that is, low and middle income Canadians.

To improve disposable income and help build greater productivity, the first target of tax reduction should be income taxes, not consumption taxes, but the Prime Minister has chosen instead to raise income taxes for low and middle income Canadians to help pay for this regressive and expensive GST cut.

Tax cuts like these set the stage for more pressure for spending cuts. Low income Canadians benefit relatively little from these tax cuts, yet the Prime Minister and his Conservative government continue to window dress for a possible election.

Another example that the Conservative government cannot be trusted to implement substantial and long-lasting solutions to critical problems is its appalling approach to child care. During the last election the Conservatives pledged to make up the shortfall through a plan to use tax incentives to create 125,000 new child care spaces. Last month the human resources minister admitted that the Conservatives cannot and will not deliver on this commitment.

• (1550)

Since coming to power, the Conservative government has made the biggest child care cut in Canadian history, slashing \$1 billion in funding from child care services in 2007 alone. The Conservative government's policy of handing over small amounts of money to individual parents instead of investing in a child care system is simply not delivering the support that young Canadian families require. This piecemeal approach to governance has become a trademark of the current Conservative regime. Canadians simply cannot trust the Prime Minister to produce a comprehensive effective solution to priority issues.

Further evidence of this exists in the Conservative environmental policy.

The Conservatives have an obligation to reduce their weak approach to combatting climate change crisis with real action. Canada will likely not meet Kyoto targets because the Prime Minister scrapped all climate change programs upon coming into office and then implemented weak substitutes. Basically, they ignored our obligations.

The Conservatives have admitted that their so-called plan would result in absolutely no reduction in Canada's total greenhouse gas pollution during the first phase of Kyoto and would not even be in place until 2010.

According to the C.D. Howe Institute, something that our Conservative friends can relate to, the Deutsche Bank, the Pembina

Institute and the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, the Conservatives will not meet their own far too modest targets and will allow the country's carbon emissions to increase until 2050 or beyond.

Under two consecutive environment ministers, there has been no attempt to move forward seriously and not even an honest and full effort to curb greenhouse gas pollution. In fact, one of the Prime Minister's first acts in office was to scrap a fully funded plan to meet Canada's Kyoto obligations and then do nothing.

This is simply unacceptable to Canadians who are looking for action and leadership in the fight against climate change and are being presented, instead, with a Prime Minister, and a government, who would much rather deny that climate change even exists.

My constituents are also looking for clarity on Canada's military involvement in Afghanistan.

The Liberal opposition is committed to staying in Afghanistan to complete a humanitarian and peacekeeping mission. However, we must be clear and unambiguous in our signal to NATO that Canada's participation in the combat mission in Kandahar ends in February 2009. Only through such clarity can Canada truly be a valuable service.

To that end, Canada must finally say our friends in NATO and the Afghan government that the February 2009 deadline to withdraw our troops from the combat mission in Kandahar is firm and they have 17 months to plan our replacement. Unfortunately, the Conservatives have approached this debate with considerably more ambiguity. Their statements on this issue have been confusing and often contradictory.

Again and again the House of Commons we heard the Conservative mantra that the mission in Kandahar would not be extended beyond 2009 without consulting Parliament. Then, while in Afghanistan, the Prime Minister changed his tune. The mission could be extended. His government would not be bound by arbitrary deadlines.

Finally, we heard there was no urgency to make a decision about extending the mission because NATO had not asked for an extension. However, NATO's Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, obliterated that argument when he requested that Canada extend its combat mission in Kandahar, forcing the Prime Minister to change his position and claim the mission would not be extended without some degree of consensus.

In Tuesday's Speech from the Throne, Canadians learned for the first time that the Conservatives would prefer to see the combat mission in Afghanistan extended to 2011. This is in addition to the fact that an independent panel has been created to advise Canadians on how best to proceed in the given circumstances.

The Address

What exactly are Canadians and their allies to make of that latest position? This ambiguity has put our allies in an unfair position. Instead of being strung along, they deserve an honest answer about Canada's desire to rotate out of Kandahar. This indecisiveness can only be harmful to our troops and the people and the values that they are working to protect.

• (1555)

Constituents in my riding and throughout northern Ontario were looking for some substantial investment in infrastructure and with so little included in the Speech from the Throne to address the growing concern, it has become painfully apparent that the Conservatives continue to ignore the people of that region.

The people of northern Ontario want to know why the Prime Minister and his Conservative government continue to abandon them, and I believe that it is time for the Prime Minister to start providing some answers.

I have said it before and I will say it again. The Conservative throne speech lacks vision and fails to address the issues that matter most to Canadians.

Over the coming weeks, my Liberal colleagues and I will be working very hard to ensure the gaps in the Conservative agenda are replaced by policies that have a positive and long-lasting effect on all Canadians. We must remain committed to build a richer, fairer and greener Canada.

• (1600)

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the comments of my colleague across the way on the environment and his comments relating to the Speech from the Throne.

He alluded to the 20% target by 2020, but I believe he talked about the 2050 target. Internationally the standards that have been negotiated at the G8+5, in Washington, through the UN, is a 50% reduction by 2050. Therefore, it is 20% by 2020 and a 50% reduction by 2050.

In the Speech from the Throne we are going even a step further. The plan is a 60% to 70% reduction by 2050, which is far beyond. The fact is our plan is one of the toughest plans in the world. I listened intently from Japan, when I was in Berlin, and it was 50% by 2050. Again, we are 60% to 70%.

For 13 years the Liberals did nothing and I asked them many times why they did not do something. I have heard that they were just about to, but they did not get it done. Even during the leadership debate, we heard them say why they did not get it done. We do not want to hear excuses. We are moving forward.

We heard from the leader of the Liberals yesterday that they would sit on their hands. I believe the member really cares about the environment. Will you support a target of 20% by—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member knows that he cannot address questions directly to people. He has to do it through the Chair.

The hon. member for Nipissing—Timiskaming.

Mr. Anthony Rota: Mr. Speaker, if you would like, you could answer in my place. I would not be held to it, just based on the question.

However, when we look at the seriousness of that question of climate change, we have seen a long history of denial when it comes to the Conservatives. There has been one denial after another.

For awhile, climate change did not exist. It did not happen. It was not going to affect anyone. There was no need to do anything. Now suddenly they are new converts, but really there is no conviction there. That is probably my biggest concern from this throne speech.

When I look at the throne speech, I want to see vision. I want to see where we are going to go and I want to see some kind of commitment. There is no commitment there. When I look at what is going on in the actual policy that is being proposed, it is intensity-based.

There have to be absolute decisions made as far as climate change goes. There has to be some absolute targets. We cannot go on intensity. Intensity-based targets allow the economy to grow, which is necessary, but the percentage that the emissions grow grows along with the economy. Therefore, as our economy gets stronger, we end up pumping more and more carbon into the atmosphere. That is something that is clearly not acceptable.

The Conservatives are looking at solutions that were thought up yesterday, a long time ago, and they are not working today.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do want to come back to the environment just briefly.

I would like to touch on the fact that the member mentioned infrastructure. The government has made record investments in infrastructure of \$33 billion, and I am sure the member knows that.

On the environment very specifically, he is a member from Ontario, as am I, and our government has made two very significant investments.

He would know that the two most significant contributors to greenhouse gas in Ontario are the generation of electricity and vehicles. He would also know that the government pumped in about \$660 million to pipe clean electricity into the province of Ontario. That will drive real results. We have also brought in serious measures both on transit and on incentives to buy greener vehicles. These are real incentives that will help Ontario.

What does the member think of those important steps that are leading toward a greener Ontario?

Mr. Anthony Rota: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member brought that up. When looking at the incentive to buy cars, the reviews and the actual impact that it has had, they have been very minimal. When we look at the number of cars that actually qualify and make a difference, it really is minimal. It does not make a lot of difference as far as actually encouraging people to buy cars.

The Address

In fact, when we look at the way the thing is implemented, if people are getting money back, it comes from the government. If they are being charged, it is being charged to the manufacturer. We can see how, when the government puts a policy together, it thinks more on politics rather than benefit to individuals and the economy. It is not about Canadians, it is not about the economy and it is not about individuals; it is about politics. It is playing the smoke and mirrors game, and that is what this seems to be.

• (1605)

Mr. Rob Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to participate in this debate today in the reply to the Speech from the Throne.

I want to address what was mentioned previously by one of the members opposite. The member wondered why our government has introduced 13 bills related to justice since we came to office. Perhaps it would be because for 13 years the Liberals neglected our justice system. For 13 years Canadians had to put up with a revolving door justice system, a soft on crime justice system and a system that put the victim somewhere at the very bottom on the list of priorities.

There remains a lot of work to be done.

The member mentioned some of the bills. Bill C-10 would have brought in mandatory minimum penalties for serious gun crimes and was stalled in committee for 252 days. Bill C-35 was stalled in committee for 64 days and 211 days between the House and the Senate. That would have provided a reverse onus on people who commit gun crimes. Bill C-27 dealt with the worst of the worst: dangerous offenders. It was 105 days in committee and 246 days in the House. Bill C-22 was to protect the young from adult sexual predators. It was 365 days in the House and the Senate.

Those members wonder why we have to work so hard. They wonder why we have to do so much.

Because they left us so much work to be done.

The government's first Speech from the Throne set clear goals and we stayed on course to achieve them. The results are evident in the improved quality of life Canadians share and the higher confidence they have in government leadership.

The new Speech from the Throne, as we heard this week, offers Canadians the same clarity and framework to build on our achievements made to date. As the Speech from the Throne notes, the government is committed to continuing to build a better Canada. We are going to do this by strengthening Canada's sovereignty and place in the world, building a stronger federation, providing effective economic leadership, continuing to tackle crime, and improving our environment.

I am pleased to stand to speak in support of our government's unwavering commitment to a balanced justice agenda, to a law-abiding society, to tackling crime, and to building safer communities, streets and neighbourhoods. I might add that in the last election this is what our constituents from coast to coast elected us to do. It is exactly what they asked us to do.

As all of us in the House know, or should know, Canadians value a law-abiding society and safe communities. The rule of law and

Canada's strong justice system are defining characteristics of what it is to be Canadian.

Canadians express strong support for the law. In fact, the vast majority of Canadians responding to a set of questions on the world values survey, repeated several times between 1990 and 2006, consistently expressed a strong willingness to abide by the law. Compared to citizens in most other countries in the world, Canadians have one of the highest levels of support for law-abiding behaviour.

We know where Canadians' values lie and we share those values. As parliamentarians, we must reflect these values in all that we do.

Canadians' perceptions of crime reflect their community experience and are supported by long term and local crime statistics and news. I am sure that every member in the House, from no matter which party, could bring forward stories from his or her own riding about how Canadians have been victimized or how someone has been a repeat offender but is allowed back into the community to re-victimize innocent Canadians. Every one of us gets those phone calls and emails. Every one of us can somehow relate to that experience.

Community leaders, victims' groups and law enforcement know their particular challenges and for once they have a government that is listening to them. Every province, territory and major city has street corners and neighbourhoods where people do not want to go any more, and if ordinary Canadians do not want to live there, then neither will they shop there or play there. Businesses will leave and schools will deteriorate.

There are too many of those street corners in Canada now. It is not consistent with Canadians' expectations and hopes for their communities. And they deserve better. All Canadians should be able to walk our streets and travel to and from our homes, schools and workplaces in safety.

• (1610)

This is why we are standing up to protect our communities and to work with Canadians to ensure a safer and more secure Canada.

Let me give the House an example of the kind of tragedy people are reading and talking about in my part of the world. The Nunn commission arose out of a tragedy in Nova Scotia. A 16 year old boy went from no prior record to a nine month crime spree involving 38 separate charges and 11 court appearances and ended when, two days after his release, high on drugs, he killed an innocent mother of three by speeding through a residential intersection.

Commissioner Nunn, who headed the inquiry into this tragedy, stated:

We should be able to halt the spiral [into crime], through prevention, through quick action, through creative thinking, through collaboration, through clear strategies, and through programs that address clearly identified needs.

The Address

I agree with Commissioner Nunn. We should be able to do better and to stop such behaviour before it gets out of control. Canadians expect and deserve no less.

These are the kinds of real life tragedies that our communities want us to address. They are the tragedies that I know my constituents expect us to address. They are the tragedies that motivate many of us on this side of the House to do something to protect innocent Canadians.

I know that Canadians across the country and in every community have similar stories of kids who are in serious trouble and causing serious harm, stories of binge drinking, using illicit drugs, committing auto theft, property crime and other crimes, all of which are elements of this tragedy I just mentioned.

Canadians are particularly concerned about crimes victimizing the most vulnerable community members, such as seniors and children. Families worry about how to keep their children and grandchildren from becoming victims of youth crime. They also worry about their young family members being drawn into the wrong crowd and beginning a life of crime.

In the face of such tragedies, Canadians look to us for a way forward, for a way out of despair for their youth and worry about the safety of their streets. They look to us for solutions. They look to us to restore their confidence in the justice system. That is what members on this side of the House intend to do. We intend to restore their confidence in the justice system.

I want to mention a few statistics.

We know that Canadians are not always confident that the criminal justice system is doing enough to protect them. That is a major theme. We have heard about this time and time again. They know that violent crime is too common. They dread hearing statistics like those released this week by Statistics Canada.

These are just a few statistics, but they tell us that four out of 10 victims of violent crime sustain injuries and that almost half of violent crimes occurred at private residences. By the way, private residences, and I am sure all members would agree, are where we should feel most safe. These are our homes. Half of violent crimes occurred at home.

The statistics also tell us that firearms were involved in 30% of homicides, 31% of attempted murders and 13% of robberies. We are all deeply saddened to hear that one out of every sixth victim of violent crime was a youth aged 12 to 17 years old. What is worse is that children under 12 years of age accounted for 23% of victims of sexual assaults and 5% of victims of violent crimes.

Of course we know that most crime is never reported. Statistics Canada's victimization survey found that only about 34% of criminal incidents committed in 2004 came to the attention of police. When we think about it, that is really an alarming statistic. For all the crime that is reported there is that much more out there that goes unreported.

There is a reason why. I hear this in my own riding and I am sure many of my colleagues do as well. Victims do not report crime because they think it will not make a difference, because our system

will not treat it seriously. It is going to take a lot of work to change that impression, but we are a government that is set on changing it.

Twenty-eight per cent of Canadians, or one in four persons, reported being victimized in 2004. When I speak with my constituents and people across this country about crime, they often tell me that the justice system does more for offenders than for victims. Our government is listening to victims, increasing their voice in the justice system and helping them play a more active role. Addressing the needs of victims of crime in Canada is a shared responsibility between federal and provincial and territorial governments. It is an issue that we are already addressing in collaboration with these partners.

● (1615)

New programs and services are being implemented in the Department of Justice. The victim fund is being enhanced to provide more resources to provinces and territories to deliver services where they are needed.

We have appointed for the first time ever a Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime, Mr. Steve Sullivan, who is a well known advocate for victims. The ombudsman will ensure that the federal government lives up to its commitments and obligations to victims of crime. I think I hear the member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe applauding the appointment of Mr. Sullivan. I thank him for that. Victims expect and deserve no less.

As mentioned, we remain committed to the goal of ensuring that all Canadians live in a safe and secure community. That is why we are introducing Bill C-2, the tackling violent crime act.

The measures in this legislation represent a clear and sustained commitment on the part of our government to deal with the crimes that weigh heavily on the minds of Canadians as they go about their daily lives. Through this bill we will address the crime of the sexual exploitation of youth by adult predators. We also are tackling the crime that takes the highest toll in death and injury: impaired driving.

We know that Canadians want us to protect them from these crimes. We know also that to do so we need the support of all hon. members as well as Canadians and our partners in the provinces and territories, in law enforcement and in community groups.

I want to speak briefly about each component. Alcohol and drug impaired driving have devastating effects on victims, families and communities. Impaired drivers are responsible for thousands of fatalities and injuries each year, not to mention billions of dollars in property damage. With this legislation, impaired drivers will face tough punishment whatever intoxicant they choose. Police and prosecutors will have more tools to use to stop them.

The Address

Statistics Canada reports that there were an alarming 75,000 impaired driving incidents in 2006 and approximately 1,200 caused bodily harm or death. According to Mothers Against Drunk Driving, alcohol and/or drugs lead to more fatalities and injuries than any other single crime. The total financial and social costs are immeasurable and these impacts are felt in all of our communities. Research by Ontario's Centre for Addiction and Mental Health shows that Ontario drunk driver fatalities decreased when the driving licences of impaired drivers were suspended for 90 days.

So there are good approaches that the police and courts can use once there is a conviction for impaired driving. Part of our job as custodians of the Criminal Code is to help them get those convictions. Then more impaired drivers can be kept off our roads and streets.

One reason that impaired driving remains common is that drug impairment is now a frequent factor. Until now, police have not had the same tools available to them to stop those who drive while impaired from drugs as they did to address alcohol impaired driving. With this bill, now they will.

If passed, this legislation will strengthen the abilities of our police and prosecutors to investigate, prosecute and penalize those who endanger the safety of their fellow Canadians through alcohol or drug impaired driving.

The bill will also ensure that the punishment fits the crime and the damage it causes. Chronic offenders, or what are called hard core offenders, will be targeted with appropriate measures. These chronic offenders are disproportionately a cause of death and injury on our roads. All of these provisions will help police, crown prosecutors and the courts deal with these offenders.

Impaired driving is hurting so many families and communities that there are calls on Parliament to take action. For example, earlier this month MADD urged that these reforms be passed as soon as possible. We are certainly listening.

I know that many members here recognize the pressing need to ensure the safety of our communities by providing our police the tools necessary to address drug impaired driving. It is time they had those tools in their hands and it is time for us to act.

On the issue of the age of protection, this is something that is very timely and is in the news all the time. It strikes at the core of our society's values in protecting the most vulnerable, in protecting the young. For the same reason, parents, teachers, police and communities share this government's commitment to protecting young people from sexual predation. One of the most disturbing thoughts for any parent is the thought of a sexual predator preying on their child.

I should mention that members from this side of the House have been advocating for this for years and we welcome having a government that takes the protection of children seriously enough to take this step.

The tackling violent crime act reintroduces our proposals to raise the age at which young people can consent to sexual activity from 14 to 16 years to better protect youth against sexual exploitation by

adult predators. In short, it will take away the ability of adult sexual predators to rely on claims that their young victims consented.

● (1620)

The Speech from the Throne provides Canadians with a clear and achievable blueprint for criminal law and policy reforms. It will provide Canadians with safer streets and healthier communities, communities and cities where people want to live and raise their families. Community by community we will build a better Canada.

I addressed some of the bills. There is a question as to why we have introduced this bill in a comprehensive format. We did it because there is a lot of work to be done and many of the measures that were introduced in the last Parliament that are substantively contained in this bill were delayed. They were delayed by the opposition. They were delayed in the House. They were delayed in committee.

In the day and age we live in members should know that many households in Canada have the Internet. Anyone can log on to the House of Commons website and read *Hansard*, as we all do. Any Canadian can read from the House of Commons committee transcripts. Canadians can judge for themselves whether there was a delay.

I sat in the justice committee while those bills were being debated. I listened to the victims of crime who came forward and begged us, as they have over the years. There are many colleagues on this side of the House who have been here a lot longer than I have been here.

In the past, the member from Calgary introduced legislation to raise the age of consent. At the time, the Liberal government did not want anything to do with it. The Liberals would not take action. Now they claim that we should not be proceeding in this format. We are going to proceed because Canadians have demanded that we act to protect children, that we get serious with repeat violent offenders, that we get serious with individuals who use firearms in the commission of a crime, and that we get serious regarding drug impaired driving, a scourge on our streets.

We are taking those concerns seriously. That is why we have brought Bill C-2 forward. I look forward to support from members on all sides of the House as we move forward to make our Canadian streets, communities and homes safer for all Canadians.

Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I invite the member to come out of the fog, not the fog of the Bay of Fundy near where he resides, but the fog of mental obfuscation that he elicited in his comments.

He said that Bill C-27, which is part of Bill C-2, was in committee for 105 days. He was on the committee. He knows there were three days only of committee meetings before it was sent on. Will he admit that?

The Address

He knows that the age of consent bill previously introduced by private members from either party did not have the close in age exemption, which this bill does and made it quite acceptable. Will he admit that the recent Statistics Canada report indicates that the homicide rate last year was down 10%? Most important, where are the 2,500 new police officers that were promised in the throne speech last time and reiterated this time? Have they been hired? Where are they?

The member talked about giving tools to the police. What we need are more people in the law enforcement field actively working on crime, crime prevention, the prosecution of crime. Where are the resources? The Conservative government now has \$14 billion to spend and has spent not a penny on that. Where are the resources?

Mr. Rob Moore: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe for his question and also for his work on the justice committee.

If I might say, it is the typical Liberal attitude: homicide is down so let us not do anything about homicide. In my opinion, if there are homicides in Canada, if there are adults who are exploiting young people, if there is drunk driving causing carnage on the streets, whether it goes up or down one year to the next, our goal as parliamentarians should always be for it to go down. I and this government will continue to work to ensure that we have a reduced crime rate, that we have reduced homicides, that we have reduced recidivism. That is one of the things that the bill addresses.

The hon. member mentioned Bill C-27 on dangerous offenders. The people of Canada can read the committee transcripts. We are dealing with individuals who are repeat serious offenders of a violent or sexual nature. Sometimes when we speak of it here, we cannot fully grasp what is involved. We read these horrific stories in the newspapers. There are cases that have been in the news recently involving repeat violent offenders, repeat sexual offenders. What happens? Our system is unable to keep them where they should be, which is behind bars, due to their recidivist nature.

We all agree we want to give people a chance, but when someone has proven that he or she is a menace to society, and there is a very high likelihood that that person is going to reoffend and has met the threshold of being a dangerous offender, then we feel that person belongs behind bars.

• (1625)

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was taken by the spectrum of issues that my friend has covered. I do not think there is any argument that when one talks about impaired driving and the implications and fallout with respect to violent sexual predators and so on, this side of the House is in full agreement.

I did not hear anything as a follow-up to the illustration that the member used with respect to the Nunn commission and the observations and recommendations as they related to youth who are involved, as the member indicated in a very short time, in gang activity and drug related activity, an activity that became absolutely abhorrent in terms of the repercussions that it had in that particular incident.

The courts many times have found themselves unable to muster the tools and the programs to mentor and deal with youth who are part of the criminal justice system, the recidivism that occurs, and young people who are violent in their behaviour. I did not hear anything about the instruments that we as a society could use to deal with this very, very troubling issue throughout our country.

I would like the member to outline where the government is going in terms of backing up the criminal justice system in the area of youth.

Mr. Rob Moore: Mr. Speaker, this government has a mandate from the Canadian people to address criminal justice issues. Obviously there is a mandate for all of us to address criminal justice issues. I note in the last election that not only the party I represent, the Conservative Party, but also the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party ran on a platform of getting tough on crime.

The problem is once the dust had settled from the election, once it was time to actually take action, we saw what we had seen in the past, that whether it is crime involving impaired driving, crime involving dangerous offenders, crime involving the exploitation of youth, crime involving young people, only members on this side of the House are taking those issues seriously.

The question was raised about police officers. Yes we need more police officers. That is why our government has made a commitment for 1,000 new RCMP officers and 2,500 new municipal or city officers. Having officers on the street is imperative to reduce violence. For young people, absolutely from coast to coast we are hearing stories that we have to have a justice system that treats crime seriously, whether the crime is committed by a young person or an adult. The impression is out there, and I think rightfully so by Canadians, that we have a revolving door justice system, a system that is too soft.

I would ask the hon. member to look to his left and right, to his friends on that side of the House, and ask why after 13 years of Liberal governance we were left with a system that requires so much work to fix it. Canadians recognize it. Our government recognizes it, and as the Minister of Justice has said, we are just getting started.

• (1630)

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice for his speech and his hard work on this file.

This summer as I travelled throughout the constituency, the constituents of Crowfoot were encouraging us to come back to Parliament and to make Parliament work. They wanted the government to continue to move forward on the priorities that they had set forward. Many were very disappointed in the logjam that had occurred because the Liberal leader had allowed the Senate to prevent the legislation from passing and receiving royal assent.

My constituents understand that we campaigned on five major priorities and we have delivered on them. Our government is accountable when spending taxpayers' dollars. We are delivering real benefits to families and we are going to continue to do that.

The Address

Where I come from in the constituency of Crowfoot, there are two things in particular that were addressed in the throne speech, things on which the opposition parties had been responsible for preventing any further action being taken.

The first one is the wasteful long gun registry. It is still wreaking havoc with lives in Crowfoot and across the country.

The second one that the member may want to comment on is that even though barley producers spoke with a strong voice in the recent plebiscite and chose freedom, the opposition in this House will not listen to them. We talk about democratization around the world. I would say that we need to start right here in this House.

Could the parliamentary secretary comment on the long gun—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure the hon. member for Crowfoot would like to leave the parliamentary secretary some time to comment.

Mr. Rob Moore: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question and I thank him also for his work on public safety and justice issues over the past many years as a critic for our party. He will know during that time when we were talking about police and front line officers that the Liberal government had cut millions of dollars from the RCMP and from our intelligence agencies. Only now under our Conservative government are we restoring pride and restoring resources to those organizations.

I am proud to say obviously—

The Deputy Speaker: The time has expired for questions and comments. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Papineau.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

In the wake of the throne speech, I would like to bring to your attention the following considerations regarding federal spending power.

First of all, I would like to remind this House that:

—for more than half a century, Quebec has challenged the existence of federal spending power. Regardless of their political stripe, all the governments of Quebec, without exception, have expressed the desire to defend the integrity of Quebec's legislative authority as well as Quebec's ability to make its own policies in areas such as education, health and social services.

The Séguin report, which received the support of all the parties in the National Assembly, recommended:

That Quebec reaffirm vigorously, as it has done traditionally, that there is no constitutional basis for federal spending power, because this "power" undermines the division of powers, as established by the Constitution;

that Quebec maintain its demand for the unconditional right to opt out, with full financial compensation, of any program put in place by the federal government in provincial jurisdictions.

In addition, the Allaire report, which forms the constitutional basis of the Action démocratique du Québec, provided for the elimination of federal spending power:

This proposal presupposes political autonomy for Quebec. It assumes that Quebec will exercise full sovereignty in its exclusive areas of jurisdiction...and that the central government's spending power in Quebec's areas of jurisdiction will be eliminated.

We can see that there is a consensus in Quebec on eliminating federal spending power.

For his part, on December 19, 2005, in Quebec City, the Prime Minister created expectations by stating that he would work to eliminate the fiscal imbalance between Ottawa and the provinces. Eliminating the fiscal imbalance implies eliminating federal spending power in Quebec's areas of jurisdiction.

He was even more specific when he subsequently said:

I have said many times, even since the election of this new government, that I am opposed and our party is opposed to federal spending power in provincial jurisdictions. In my opinion, such spending power in the provinces' exclusive jurisdictions goes against the very spirit of federalism. Our government is clear that we do not intend to act in that way.

I repeat that it was the Prime Minister who said this.

In the last throne speech, the Prime Minister said that his:

— Government will introduce legislation to place formal limits on the use of the federal spending power for new shared-cost programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction. This legislation will allow provinces and territories to opt out with reasonable compensation if they offer compatible programs.

What the Bloc was asking for was that Ottawa promise to stop all spending in Quebec's areas of jurisdiction, through the pure and simple elimination of the federal spending pseudo-power—the legitimacy of which Quebec has always disputed—or by granting Quebec the unconditional right to opt out with full compensation from any federal program in areas of provincial jurisdiction.

What is espoused in the throne speech is obviously not what we were asking for.

It is as if Jean Chrétien wrote the latest throne speech. In the February 28, 1996, Speech from the Throne, he stated:

The Government will not use its spending power to create new shared-cost programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction without the consent of a majority of the provinces. Any new program will be designed so that non-participating provinces will be compensated, provided they establish equivalent or comparable initiatives.

● (1635)

We know what this type of framework for federal spending power means. The Leader of the Opposition, the father of the social union, could not disown such a text. The current Liberal leader was behind the social union framework agreement—signed by Ottawa and nine English-speaking provinces—which states:

With respect to any new Canada-wide initiatives in health care, post-secondary education, social assistance and social services that are funded through intergovernmental transfers, whether block-funded or cost-shared, the Government of Canada will:

Not introduce such new initiatives without the agreement of a majority of provincial governments

A provincial/territorial government which, because of its existing programming, does not require the total transfer to fulfill the agreed objectives would be able to reinvest any funds not required for those objectives in the same or a related priority area.

Quebec obviously refused to sign such an agreement and demanded that:

the Social Union Framework Agreement recognize its historic position by providing for the right of unconditional withdrawal with full financial compensation from any new federal initiative or program, whether or not the cost is shared, in the sector of social programs that fall within provincial responsibility.

The Address

The government says in the Speech from the Throne that it will confine itself to shared-cost programs. However, most of the federal spending in areas of Quebec jurisdiction is not for shared-cost programs but for interference pure and simple.

In the 1950s and 1960s, most of the federal spending in areas of Quebec jurisdiction was for shared-cost programs. There was hospitalization insurance, income security, and so forth. But now there are fewer and fewer shared-cost programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction.

What we have now are, first, conditional transfers through which Ottawa gives the provinces money so that they will implement federal priorities and, second, interference pure and simple, such as the new Mental Health Commission of Canada or the cervical cancer vaccination program, both of which were announced by the Conservatives in 2007.

The government is limiting itself, therefore, to new programs and doing nothing about 100 years of federal interference in areas of Quebec jurisdiction.

We should realize that in the 2005-06 fiscal year, the federal government spent no less than \$55 billion in areas outside its own jurisdiction.

The Conservative government apparently thinks that this is perfectly acceptable and should continue indefinitely. The only conclusion we can draw is that the open federalism extolled by the Conservatives is nothing but a con game.

What the government is offering is fair compensation for new instances of shared-cost interference. There are no assurances of full compensation. Ottawa is actually reserving the right to punish any provinces that refuse to embark on these new programs.

In addition, the government is reserving the right to impose Canada-wide standards even in areas outside its own jurisdiction. Only those provinces that “offer compatible programs” will be allowed to partly opt out of these new instances of federal interference.

In conclusion, this amounts to saying that if the nation of Quebec makes choices that are different from those of the nation of Canada, its right to opt out will be eliminated—something that we will never accept.

•(1640)

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the speech of the parliamentary secretary, he laid out a number of statistics about the number of days the legislation was in process and indicated that this was a clear indication that the opposition parliamentarians were delaying the legislation. The member may want to comment on this because it appears he has given calendar days and has not taken into account that the House does not sit about five months a year.

He also did not indicate that the justice committee at the time was dealing with several consecutive individual bills, and it can only deal with one at a time. Even if the bills have passed at second reading and been referred to committee, the committee cannot stop its work on one bill to do another. By having separate bills, the government

engineered this delay. The proof of that is the government is now prepared to bring forward an omnibus bill to deal with these as one before the committee, which is more efficient and would get these things through much more quickly.

I think the facts would speak for themselves. The member may want to comment on the government's inefficiency in dealing with important legislation.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

It is obvious that the Conservative government constantly uses tricks and half-truths to make the public believe they are doing what they said they would. However, time and time again, we see that they use available data inappropriately to make it seem as though they are keeping their promises, when that is not the case.

Reintroducing bills that this Parliament has already rejected shows that the Conservatives have no respect for the quality of the people's representatives.

When we reject a bill, we tell the government clearly why the people we represent do not like the bill.

I think introducing these bills again is a way of telling the people that there is only one truth, the Conservative truth, and that all the opposition members serve no purpose in this House, which is false.

•(1645)

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak today in this House. I am doing so from a new seat, a little closer, in the front row next to my colleague. I am sure this will allow me to better comment on this government's initiatives which, as we can see today in the Speech from the Throne, far from meet the needs and interests of Quebecers in terms of the five conditions the Bloc Québécois set for supporting the speech.

This Speech from the Throne is very disappointing. It is especially disappointing when it comes to fighting climate change. When I came to this House 10 years ago, there was a Reform Party and a Canadian Alliance Party on this side of the House and they did not believe that climate change existed. They did everything they could to undermine the opposition parties who at the time believed that the Kyoto protocol was the best tool for fighting climate change. Those hon. members at the time preferred to believe in the analyses and studies from the oil industry, which said that climate change was strictly a natural phenomenon that had nothing to do with human activity. Even though the world's leading academics showed that there was a direct link between human activity, industrial activity and global warming, those hon. members, who are now in government, weakened and killed the best tool we had and that was the Kyoto protocol.

The Address

Ten years later, we are proud that, in a Speech from the Throne, this government recognizes for the first time that climate change does exist. However, we would have preferred that those parties and those members of Parliament had recognized that fact at the time. We probably would have been able to progress more quickly and been able to present the international community with a record of greenhouse gas reductions that was more impressive than the Minister of the Environment reported to the United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Nairobi.

In the Speech from the Throne, in particular on page 14, we read that the government believes strongly in an effective global approach to greenhouse gas emissions. It believes that must include binding targets that apply to all major emitters, including Canada. However, in fact, those binding targets proposed by the government are nothing more than targets based on an increase of our production and not on a real, absolute reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. That means that the more barrels of oil we produce, the more we will continue to pollute.

With this Speech from the Throne, the government is trying to make the public believe that there are binding targets that will help us to improve our performance on greenhouse gas emissions. We say again: the intensity targets favoured by the government to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are nothing more than window dressing and serve only to benefit the petroleum industry which makes exorbitant profits and which continues to ignore a worldwide social consensus that should enable us to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

This international leadership to which the government supposedly wants to commit us is clearly spelled out within the Speech from the Throne. It refers to meetings of APEC and the G-8. One could even add the meetings between the Prime Minister and George W. Bush in Washington and the meetings in Australia with Prime Minister Howard, whose purpose was nothing less than ensuring that there were no real targets for reducing greenhouse gases in the short or medium term and no timetable.

● (1650)

What the government decided to do in this Speech from the Throne, is clearly drop its support for the Kyoto protocol. It is our duty to denounce that decision.

We have to remember that the government lied to the public. We have to remember that in Nairobi, where I was part of a delegation of parliamentarians, the then Minister of the Environment made a solemn promise in front of the international community that Canada would respect its obligations under the Kyoto protocol. More than a year later, we learn that the government has decided to toss the protocol out with the trash.

We cannot accept that in Quebec. Why? Simply because 90% of Quebecers want to respect the Kyoto protocol. The Government of Quebec has implemented a plan that allows our province to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. Quebec's industrial sectors have reduced their greenhouse gas emissions by 7%, in an absolute manner, not on an intensity basis, as the government is proposing.

We were the first province in Canada to come up with a plan to fight climate change. That is why we want the government to respect the Kyoto protocol.

We are also disappointed that the government has not said anything about where the carbon exchange announced in the Speech from the Throne will be located. The Montreal Exchange has already achieved an enviable degree of expertise that gives it an advantage over all other stock exchanges in Canada except for Toronto, of course. Now Toronto wants control over derivatives. The Montreal Exchange developed the derivatives market and has significant expertise in this area. It signed an agreement with Chicago. Why is it that now, 10 years later, just as the agreement between Montreal and Toronto is about to come to an end, Toronto wants control over the derivatives market that strengthened the Montreal Exchange's role at a time when none of the other Canadian stock markets believed in it?

Today we are telling the government that if it sides with Bay Street, we will side with Saint-Jacques Street because these businesses operating in various industrial and manufacturing sectors—I met with their representatives again yesterday—have reduced their greenhouse gas emissions by 25% to 30%. They decided to invest in changing their industrial processes. They have accumulated credits by making structural changes in their industries, and they are ready to participate in an emissions credits trading system now.

Now these businesses are being told that they should pay for the failure of other provinces to reduce emissions. That is completely unacceptable.

Today, I was very disappointed to see the Liberal Party of Canada support this Speech from the Throne. I am disappointed because I thought that the opposition parties in this House had built a strong consensus concerning our Kyoto commitments. Quebec and the Bloc Québécois still support the Kyoto accord, but elsewhere in Canada, support is dwindling. For years, the Liberals supported Kyoto, but now, the Conservatives have told the international community that they want to toss it out with the trash.

In closing, I would like to assure Quebecers that as long as we are here in this House—and there will be more of us than ever before in the coming years—we will continue to support the Kyoto accord because we believe that fighting climate change is both an environmental imperative and an economic one.

● (1655)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his comments. I am familiar with his expertise in the subject matter, since we sat together on the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. In fact, I hope we will do so again in the course of this new session.

I would nevertheless like to assure my colleague that the Liberal Party fully supports the Kyoto protocol. We must agree on that. But he already knows this, since it was our party that proposed the carbon budget that was included in Bill C-30, a bill that was passed by the committee.

The Address

Let us move on. I have a technical question for the member. A number of times now, we have heard that the government wanted to limit the increase in greenhouse gas emissions and, at the same time, create a carbon exchange. However, in order for a carbon exchange to really take root, we need absolute limits on greenhouse gas emissions, do we not? That is my first question.

My second question is this. Last week, the *Globe and Mail* revealed that business leaders and executives of Canada's largest companies want the government to adopt absolute limits on greenhouse gas emissions. The government clearly refuses to listen to the public or to Canada's business leaders. So, who does it listen to?

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Speaker, not only do Canadians support the Kyoto protocol, but many businesses—more than 150 major businesses—say that we need an effective plan to fight climate change. What these companies are asking for is a clear federal strategy, something that is presently lacking. If businesses could have clear rules, they would certainly be able to adjust.

Second, with regard to intensity targets, the establishment of a carbon exchange and absolute targets is ideal. However, at the same time it could still work with intensity targets.

I must mention what Europe said and reminded us of a few years ago. Europe is an important market, a market of more than \$70 billion, which has significant economic opportunities for Quebec and Canadian companies. A few years ago, Europe clearly indicated that if we did not adopt absolute targets, if we favoured intensity targets, it would be difficult for the European and Canadian credit exchange systems to be compatible.

The answer, therefore, is as follows: yes, intensity targets make it more difficult to establish an exchange and an emissions credit exchange system in Canada. For that reason, the government must immediately implement not only mandatory targets as it is claiming to do, but it must also quickly put in place absolute targets.

• (1700)

[*English*]

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, congratulations to you on your reappointment. I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for West Nova.

On Tuesday evening we had the opportunity to listen to the government's vision for Canada. It was a Speech from the Throne that was vague, offering little new hope for Canadians and indeed, offering little new, claiming success of failed programs and often the rebranding of old policies and programs.

However, I want to speak tonight about a number of things in the very short time I have. I want to touch on some of the issues that impact on my community, and I want to talk on matters that are related to first nations, Inuit and Métis.

What can Manitobans really take away from the throne speech? The government said it has given real choice for families through the taxable child care benefit, but has forgotten to speak on the reality of child care in Canada. On September 27, the headline in the *Winnipeg Free Press* read, "Tories say they made a child care boo boo".

The Minister of Human Resources and Social Development admitted his government could not live up to its commitment to deliver 125,000 child care spaces. Millions of dollars were cut from child care in Manitoba, from \$176 million under the previous Liberal government to only a \$9 million annual direct payment to the province. In Winnipeg there are more children's names on wait lists than there are children who receive child care in the city.

How can the government say that a taxable monthly \$100 allowance gives parents a real choice when indeed there is really no choice for them: no places for children; no opportunities for their mothers to go back to school, to enter the workforce; or often, indeed, to remain in the workforce?

Yesterday, in a speech in Winnipeg, Dr. Fraser Mustard linked the outcomes of early childhood education to the reduction of criminal activities and positive mental health during adolescence. He said that the annual cost to individuals and Canadian society of poor early childhood development is estimated at \$120 billion for crime and \$100 billion annually in mental health and behaviour.

What will this also mean for the federal spending power? We know that great national cost shared programs brought us together as citizens, regardless of where we lived: medicare, Canada pension plan. The list is long; the list goes on.

In the last session of Parliament the members opposite introduced 13 crime and justice bills. The official opposition supported a majority of these bills and offered to fast track eight of them. Despite their mantra that their government is getting tough on crime, the Conservatives decided to delay their own legislation. There was no obstruction by the opposition. Indeed, on March 21, an opposition day motion would have immediately resulted in the passage of all stages of four of the bills. Again, there was no cooperation.

The government has also failed to act on its campaign commitment to hire more police officers. Now we see this commitment reannounced once more. This time we hope the government will follow through.

Over the past months I have met with many community groups to discuss community safety. Over and over again we have heard the need for more community policing, but a lack of resources and not enough policemen to assign there.

Also, from the young people at Macdonald Youth Services, I heard about the importance of programs: programs to rehabilitate, programs to support, and programs to keep young people out of the justice system.

The Address

Last month I attended here in Ottawa when a Manitoba delegation, led by the Premier, met to discuss issues of crime and safety. I want to assure them that I want to see their concerns met, most particularly making auto theft an indictable offence.

The throne speech said a new water strategy will be implemented to help clean up our major lakes and oceans. What about Devils Lake? Between June and August, North Dakota turned the Devils Lake outlet on and off three times, breaching the agreement the previous government negotiated with the White House. Again, there was silence from this government. Where is a realistic plan and where are realistic resources to act on the clean up of Lake Winnipeg?

There was nothing about education in the throne speech, nothing about the alleviation of the debt load for post-secondary students, and nothing about increasing access to post-secondary education for students who have less. There is a \$13 billion surplus and no investment in young people.

●(1705)

We know the Conservatives have silenced the court challenges program. The government has silenced those who cannot speak for themselves. Yesterday we celebrated the accomplishments of six women who received the Governor General's award for the commemoration of Persons Day. These women made a difference in their communities by working for the advancement of women in significant ways.

The government has taken away the tools for advocacy dollars for women. Equality seeking is not acceptable.

In my riding individuals and organizations are calling on the government to take action on Darfur. In my own riding, not far from where I live, the Shaarey Zedek synagogue is next week having a large gathering calling on the congregation to mobilize and speak out on the genocide in Darfur, and from this government there is not a word. It is not in its neighbourhood.

I want to touch on the issues of aboriginal peoples. We know that with aboriginal peoples relations were at an all time high under the previous Liberal government with the signing of the Kelowna accord and then they reached an all time low on June 29 of this year with the national day of action provoked by the inaction of the current government.

I acknowledge the Prime Minister's indication that he will apologize on behalf of Canadians for the legacy of residential schools. I support that. I salute that. As the Leader of the Opposition said, we all support the decision but it is long overdue. Members on this side have been asking for this apology for over a year. There is still much to do to repair the damage that has been put upon the aboriginal peoples.

It is imperative that the government treat aboriginal peoples with respect, that members of the government speak about aboriginal peoples with respect today and in the future, and that they treat their concerns about legislation and the legislative process with respect.

The government brought shame to Canada with its actions on the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous people. Not only was it one of four countries voting against the declaration but its active

lobbying against it, against the advice of the officials of three departments, was a blemish on Canada's international reputation.

The declaration fortunately was adopted by 144 countries. Indeed, it was an embarrassment for Canada. Aboriginal people want respect.

The throne speech indicated that it would be reintroducing legislation that would repeal section 67 of the Canadian Human Rights Act. I have said it many times in the House, and in committee, and I will put it on the record once more, the official opposition supports the intent of Bill C-44, but what we do not support is the process, the lack of consultation, the lack of consideration, and the lack of respect shown to aboriginal peoples.

I want to add that human rights also means clean water, safe communities, a house to live in and an opportunity for education. We look forward to the introduction of legislation to deal with the outstanding specific claims. We look forward to it with optimism and are hopeful that in this case with consultation and cooperation there will be a positive result. We acknowledge the intent to take action on behalf of the Inuit, but the throne speech was silent on the Métis and there was no mention of an urban aboriginal strategy.

Closing the gap between aboriginal and non-aboriginal Canadians remains a number one priority for Canadians. First nations people face a horrible injustice when the level of poverty in their communities is staggering. The future for aboriginal Canadians is Canada's future. More than half of first nations people in this country are under the age of 23.

Education is critical for aboriginal people, the first nations aboriginal children in the cities and Métis children. It is the government's responsibility to act now to stop first nations poverty from perpetuating into future generations.

●(1710)

As I said, the throne speech offered little new for Canadians. It continues to bring forward old news. I will continue to speak up for the interests of my constituents and for aboriginal, Métis and Inuit Canadians.

Hon. Jason Kenney (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct the member opposite on several points.

First, she claimed that the Prime Minister has not uttered a word about the ongoing crisis in Darfur. This is simply, objectively and factually incorrect.

In fact during his speech yesterday in this place, in reply to the Speech from the Throne, he spoke about the ongoing humanitarian disaster in Darfur. In fact, our government's response to that disaster has been more robust than that of the government to which the member belonged, as has our response to the sad legacy of the aboriginal school situation.

The Address

She is criticizing this government for not having made an apology with respect to the aboriginal schools situation. She sat on the other side for several of the 13 years that her party was in power. Do my colleagues recall ever having heard any apology in any of those 13 years? Did she ever ask for such an apology when she was in the government caucus? If so, why did she fail, and then why would she so unfairly criticize this government for doing precisely what her government failed to do?

Why further would she criticize this government for the terrible conditions under which too many aboriginal people live, when in fact her party in government had 13 years to address issues of water quality, living standards and housing on reserves, issues on which this government is taking and will take further concrete actions?

Could she explain to us this total lack of logic?

Hon. Anita Neville: Mr. Speaker, the member's posturing and high drama indicates a real lack of understanding of the issues related to the residential schools agreement.

If the member had done his homework, he would know that the residential schools agreement was negotiated by the previous government. He will note that the picture was on the front page of *The Globe and Mail* identifying and completing it. He will note that an apology was committed.

He will also know that there was no response when this question was asked in this House time and time again, that the deal was completed and where was the apology. He will know that, and this posturing and fluffing will not make a bit of difference to the aboriginal peoples of this country who know the truth.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier this year, most of the members of this House received delegations from the police associations of Canada, and they reminded all members that one of the promises of the Conservative Party was that immediately upon taking office, it would address the question of the 2,500 officers. They were very disappointed when they came to see me because after two budgets they still had not produced one officer.

Does the hon. member recall that promise and give it any credence as to whether the Conservatives are simply misleading, being hypocritical or slightly taking this House to its advantage?

Hon. Anita Neville: Mr. Speaker, I too met with the police here in Ottawa and I met with the police on several occasions in Winnipeg. We are now in the process of choosing a new chief of police. There have been public meetings on that and I have had a number of round tables with both youth and community members, with police present to discuss the issues of crime.

We know that community policing is being cried out for in Manitoba, in the city of Winnipeg and in the other smaller cities in the province. We know that there is a human resource shortage. We know that they do not have the staff to allocate for community policing, so yes, we know that there is a need for it. It was introduced last year and nothing was done. The government is reintroducing it again this year. Let us hope something comes of it.

● (1715)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): We have enough time for a very brief question or comment from the hon. member for Peterborough.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question pertains to the issue of hypocrisy and I would just like to ask the hon. member this question.

She is well aware that we have made very significant commitments in the areas of affordable housing. We have increased funding directly to families. We have provided a much better support to families than her government ever did. However, she stands in her place and criticizes a government that has made a real effort to make the lives of Canadians better. Why does she stand in her place and make these kinds of comments when she knows full well that her government did not?

Hon. Anita Neville: Mr. Speaker, the member's government has made an effort to address the issues of only those members of Canada whom it believes will vote for it. There are vast numbers of Canadians who are being overlooked by—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Order, please. It being 5:15 p.m. it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the subamendment now before the House.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): All those in favour of the subamendment 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.

● (1750)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on the amendment to the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 1*)

YEAS

Members

André
Bachand
Bellavance
Blais
Bouchard
Brunelle

Asselin
Barbot
Bigras
Bonsant
Bourgeois
Cardin

The Address

Carrier
DeBellefeuille
Deschamps
Faille
Gagnon
Gravel
Guimond
Laforest
Lalonde
Lemay
Lévesque
Malo
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Ouellet
Perron
Plamondon
St-Cyr
Thi Lac

Crête
Demers
Duceppe
Freeman
Gaudet
Guay
Kotto
Laframboise
Lavallée
Lessard
Lussier
Ménard (Hochelaga)
Nadeau
Paquette
Picard
Roy
St-Hilaire
Vincent — 48

Lauzon
Lebel
Lee
Lukiwski
Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)
Malhi
Manning
Marleau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse
Matthews
McCallum
McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Merrifield
Mills
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)

Layton
LeBlanc
Lemieux
Lunn
MacAulay
MacKenzie
Maloney
Mark
Marston
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Mathysen
Mayes
McDonough
McGuire
Menzies
Miller
Minna
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)

NAYS**Members**

Abbott
Albrecht
Allen
Ambrose
Anderson
Arthur
Bagnell
Barnes
Beaumier
Bell (Vancouver Island North)
Bennett
Bernier
Bevington
Black
Blaikie
Bonin
Boucher
Brison
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Bruinooge
Calkins
Cannis
Carrie
Casson
Charlton
Chow
Clement
Comuzzi
Crowder
Cullen (Etobicoke North)
Cuzner
Davidson
Day
Devolin
Dhaliwal
Dion
Doyle
Dykstra
Emerson
Eyking
Finley
Flaherty
Fry
Gallant
Godin
Goodale
Gourde
Guarnieri
Hanger
Harris
Hawn
Hiebert
Hinton
Hubbard
Jaffer
Jennings
Kadis
Karetak-Lindell
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Khan
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)

Ablonczy
Alghabra
Allison
Anders
Angus
Atamanenko
Baird
Batters
Bélanger
Bell (North Vancouver)
Benoit
Bevilacqua
Bezan
Blackburn
Blaney
Boshcoff
Breitkreuz
Brown (Oakville)
Brown (Barrie)
Byrne
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannon (Pontiac)
Casey
Chamberlain
Chong
Christopherson
Comartin
Cotler
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cummins
D'Amours
Davies
Del Mastro
Dewar
Dhalla
Dosanjh
Dryden
Easter
Epp
Fast
Fitzpatrick
Fletcher
Galipeau
Godfrey
Goldring
Goodyear
Grewal
Guergis
Harper
Harvey
Hearn
Hill
Holland
Ignatieff
Jean
Julian
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karygiannis
Keeper
Komarnicki
Lake

Mulcair
Murphy (Charlottetown)
Neville
Norlock
Obhrai
Pacetti
Paradis
Pearson
Poilievre
Preston
Proulx
Redman
Reid
Ritz
Rodriguez
Savage
Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger
Sgro
Siksay
Simard
Skelton
Solberg
St. Amand
Stanton
Storseth
Sweet
Temelkovski
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Tilson
Tonks
Turner
Valley
Van Loan
Verner
Wallace
Warawa
Wasylycia-Leis
Wilfert
Wilson
Yelich

PAIRED**Members**

Kenney (Calgary Southeast) Mourani — 2

The Speaker: I declare the amendment to the amendment lost.

[*English*]

It being 5:50 p.m. the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS***[Translation]***SPECIAL IMPORT MEASURES ACT**

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ) moved that Bill C-411, An Act to amend the Special Import Measures Act (domestic prices), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-411, which I am introducing today at second reading, sets out criteria that we hope will make it easier to detect dumping and will provide better protection for Canadian businesses.

Competition in the business environment has changed enormously in recent years, and the manufacturing sector has been hard hit. The rise in value of the dollar is an aggravating factor that has dealt a serious blow to Quebec's economy. However, we believe that increasing competition from Asia is the main factor in the distress of many of our companies.

Between 2001 and 2006, Chinese imports to Canada nearly tripled, going from \$12 billion to \$32 billion. What is more, Canada now has a \$26 billion trade deficit with China. In Quebec, traditional industries are suffering the most from Asian competition right now. Chinese textile and clothing imports have risen eightfold, furniture imports have increased sixfold and bicycle imports have grown fivefold. Needless to say, our traditional industries are suffering and job losses are multiplying.

The government is doing nothing to help these companies, and the manufacturing sector is being devastated. Between 2003 and 2006, 100,000 manufacturing jobs disappeared in Quebec. In 2006 alone, the first year this government was in power, 35,000 jobs were lost in Quebec's manufacturing sector. And 2007 is shaping up to be even worse. Quebec had 29,000 fewer manufacturing jobs at the end of February than it had at the beginning of January this year.

The more traditional sectors were the hardest hit, including the clothing industry, which has lost almost half of its workers since 2000. The textile industry has lost a quarter of its employees since 2000. The furniture industry has also had a 22% drop in its workforce, and the forest industry has lost 10,000 jobs since April 2005 alone.

Currently, the industry is being left to fend for itself. This is the policy of this Conservative government, at a time when the industry is experiencing terrible difficulties.

Programs for the textile and clothing industries were cut from the budget in 2006. The main federal support program for research and development called Technology Partnerships Canada came to an end on December 31. The Conservatives claimed it was because of administrative problems, even though analyses confirmed that all these programs were very effective.

As for trade laws, the Conservatives decided not to implement the laws that would temporarily protect our companies and give them time to adapt to the new environment and to modernize.

As the members of the Standing Committee on Industry unanimously agreed in February 2007, trade laws must genuinely protect businesses from unfair competition, which is called dumping.

The Bloc Québécois has decided to propose a series of measures for Quebec industries that are facing the biggest challenges: the furniture, textile, clothing, forest and aerospace industries, the marine industry and high-tech industries in general.

I will backtrack a little in order to explain what dumping means.

• (1755)

Dumping is an unfair and illegal trade practice by which a company exports a product at a price that is lower than the normal production cost or lower than the price at which it is sold within the exporting country. When a business adopts practices of this nature, it must expect some countries to impose anti-dumping duties in order to counter such unfair practices.

How do we measure dumping? Generally, to determine if a foreign company is practising dumping, we must look at the price at which the product is sold within its own market. If the product's selling price is lower here, this constitutes dumping. We must be careful: this practice is only valuable if the fair price can really be identified. We can also ask the company to turn over its books and total all its costs in order to determine if the sale price reflects the production cost. Once again, this way of proceeding is only valuable if the production costs are accurate. They can be altered by government intervention in production costs. For example, an intervention might involve the government paying for the electricity needed to manufacture the product.

When the bank is government owned and gives a loan at a prime rate, or if the currency is artificially devalued—we need only think of the Chinese yuan, which is 40% lower than its real, normal value, specifically to help Chinese companies export their products—or when the books do not account for all the normal costs because of inadequate accounting practices, in these instances it is pointless to look at their accounting books.

Also, when various government practices play a role in altering the data, we will not necessarily be able to calculate the fair price. These practices could involve devaluing the dollar, indirect assistance or assistance to the business' subcontractors. We must look further. This is what bill C-411 proposes.

Private Members' Business

The United States and the European Union do more than just look to see whether the Chinese government is directly involved in setting prices on products, which is what the Government of Canada does. The U.S. and the EU have issued a series of criteria to assess whether the practices of the Chinese government falsify the costs and the prices. In particular, they look at the value of the currency. As I was saying earlier, it is widely known that the yuan is deliberately devalued to artificially lower the prices of Chinese exports. The regulations in China are also considered, but they know full well that these are not always on par with universally recognized regulations. This practice allows the Chinese to hide data. The U.S. and the EU go much further and do more investigating. The production cost and the input cost to manufacture a product can be artificially lowered if the supplier of the raw materials or parts is a government corporation. Thus, the EU and the U.S. evaluate the suppliers. While Canada imposes anti-dumping tax on only 17 Chinese products, the United States taxes 53. While the European Union taxes 49 products, Canada carries on with its 17 little Chinese products only and these products enter freely here in Canada.

Bill C-411 is based on legislation in effect in the United States and in Europe and lays out criteria to be taken into account to assess whether there is dumping, which we hope will better protect Quebec and Canada's businesses from the illegal practice of dumping.

• (1800)

[English]

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify that the manufacturing sector is very important to our government. If the member would pay attention to the last budget, she would know that specifically the industry committee's number one recommendation was to accelerate the capital cost for depreciation for the acquisition of equipment to two years to help manufacturers deal with the competitive global markets as well as the rising dollar so they could take advantage of investing in equipment in other countries. I know manufacturers in my riding have taken advantage of that specific budget policy and are very appreciative of it.

At a time when our economy is as strong as it is and unemployment is at a 33 year low, the member is proposing to put forward an amendment to a single provision of the legislation without taking into account broad considerations, and this has never happened before.

Is my hon. colleague not concerned that her new approach may result in a law that does not reflect an appropriate balance of interest?

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

There have been a few minor investments in research and development, but this is not enough and it is not what companies need.

Although the manufacturing sector is concentrated mainly in Quebec, Canadian as well as Quebec firms need safeguards to protect them against this huge influx of goods from China and other emerging economies.

We must ensure that companies from emerging economies do not import goods that they manufacture to Canada and sell them for less than on their domestic market. That is important.

As the Auditor General of Canada said, the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency is not currently equipped to get to the bottom of things. We hope that putting criteria in place will make it possible to add skilled staff to get to the bottom of things.

• (1805)

Mr. Raymond Gravel (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from Terrebonne—Blainville for introducing a bill that is especially important to many manufacturing companies in the riding of Shefford, including Raleigh, which makes bicycles.

Raleigh spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to defend its dumping complaint before the Canadian International Trade Tribunal, which finally recommended a surtax on bicycle imports from China. Yet, as with other CITT decisions, the Minister of Finance did not budge.

What could Bill C-411 do for a company like Raleigh?

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Repentigny for his extremely important question. It touches on two things: first, the discretionary power of the minister to agree to antidumping measures or not and, second, the entire issue of the cost a business has to incur to appeal to the Canada Revenue Agency and the Canadian International Trade Tribunal, the CITT.

If a company suspects that there is dumping on the Canadian market, it is required to go to the Canada Revenue Agency first. The cost is between \$50,000 and \$100,000 and can even reach \$200,000. If the Canada Revenue Agency finds that there was indeed dumping, then the Canadian International Trade Tribunal—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member for Terrebonne—Blainville. I have to allow the hon. member for Peterborough to ask a brief question.

[English]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC): Very briefly, Mr. Speaker, Quebec has a number of industries that do business with Asian countries, such as China, which the bill would certainly target. Specifically with regard to the aerospace industry in Quebec, which benefits from trade with countries such as China, does the member not feel that the retroactive action which would be taken through measures like this would impose potentially very significant negative factors on Quebec? I wonder if she has considered them at all.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): The hon. member for Terrebonne—Blainville will provide a very short answer.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the hon. member's question. Nonetheless, I do not know if I will have enough time to give him an answer. His question is related to the answer I wanted to give the hon. member for Repentigny about the Canadian International Trade Tribunal. If I may, I would like to come back to that.

The Canadian International Trade Tribunal has to ensure that the aerospace market is not being hobbled. Again, this can cost between \$50,000 and \$200,000.

After companies have exhausted the normal recourse to the Canada Revenue Agency and the Canadian International Trade Tribunal, it can become very expensive for them to exercise their rights—\$400,000 in the case of Raleigh. The minister can veto and say that there was no dumping, when the proof is there—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member for Terrebonne—Blainville. We have to continue the debate. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for the opportunity to comment on the private member's bill tabled by the member for Terrebonne—Blainville calling on the government to amend the Special Import Measures Act.

The bill proposes an amendment to section 20 of the Special Import Measures Act. The amendment would set out the conditions required for deeming whether domestic prices in a country are substantially determined by the government of that country and whether there is sufficient reason to believe that they are not substantially the same as they would be if they were determined in a competitive market.

The Special Import Measures Act, or SIMA, is Canada's principal legal instrument that governs the application of anti-dumping and countervailing duties to imports of dumped or subsidized goods that are found to cause injury to domestic producers.

Under SIMA, a Canadian industry is entitled to trade remedy protection if it is established through a formal investigation that the imports are being dumped or subsidized and that the dumping or subsidizing has caused or threatens to cause injury to that industry.

In such a case, definitive anti-dumping or countervailing duties are normally levied on all imported subject goods for a period of five years, with the possibility of an extension if Canada's administering authorities, those being the Canada Border Services Agency and the Canadian International Trade Tribunal, determine that there is likely to be a continuation or a recurrence of dumping or subsidization and injury if the duties are removed.

SIMA implements Canada's rights and obligations under two WTO agreements: the anti-dumping agreement and an agreement on subsidies and countervailing measures.

Key provisions of these agreements include methods for determining the existence of dumping and countervailable subsidies, requirements for the initiation of investigations, obligations respect-

ing procedural fairness, the duration of orders and the transparency in the decision making.

In addition, these agreements set out the economic factors to be considered in determining whether injury exists and whether or not such injury is caused by dumped or subsidized imports.

As originally drafted in 1984, SIMA represents a balance of interests between those parties requiring protection from injuriously dumped or subsidized imports and those requiring secure access to imports to ensure profitability for their economic activities.

The importance of this balance between imports and production concerns continues to be relevant as the dependence of Canadian manufacturers on imported inputs has increased substantially since 1984.

Today, imported inputs make up 34% of the content of goods manufactured in Canada.

When SIMA was reviewed by the subcommittees of the Standing Committee on Finance and the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade in 1996, the subcommittees' conclusion was that the basic circumstances that motivated Canada to establish SIMA continued to exist; that is to say, the law provides basic protection to Canadian producers while limiting unnecessary collateral damage to downstream users of the products in question.

During the 1996 review of SIMA, a large number of interested parties representing a wide cross-section of the Canadian economy appeared before the subcommittees to present their views. The witnesses commented on whether the legislation continued to adequately serve Canada's national economic interests, including industries that benefit from trade remedy protection and industry associations that must import goods as a normal course of business.

Following the completion of this review, Canadian industries also took advantage of the opportunity to make their views on these issues known to the government in the context of the Doha round of trade negotiations at the WTO.

As part of the extensive consultation process related to the WTO, the government received 23 submissions from industry and provincial governments that provided input for developing Canada's position on the negotiations, which aim to clarify and improve disciplines related to the WTO anti-dumping and subsidy agreements.

● (1810)

The government takes the consultation process very seriously and regularly updates industry on the status of negotiations. Extensive consultations are critical for developing and maintaining an effective multilateral negotiating position and are equally important in the consideration of unilateral changes to Canada's domestic trade laws.

In fact, the government has recently received recommendations from two parliamentary standing committees that call for the government to conduct a review of Canada's trade remedy system. The first recommendation came in the February 2007 report of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology entitled "Manufacturing: Moving Forward—Rising to the Challenge".

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Two of the recommendations were trade policy related, one of which recommended that the government conduct an internal review of Canadian anti-dumping countervail and safeguard policies, practices and their applications to ensure that Canada's trade remedy laws and practices remain current and effective.

This review would also include comparisons with other WTO members such as the EU and the U.S. This recommendation was based on the standing committee's observation that the growing economies of countries such as China and India represent a challenge for Canadian producers to both their domestic and American export markets. As well, the standing committee noted the concern expressed by some industries regarding an apparent divergence between Canadian trade law and its application, and it believed more information was required. This led to the recommendation for a review of Canada's trade remedy system.

Following this report came an April 2007 report of the Standing Committee on International Trade entitled "Ten Steps to a Better Trade Policy". Among the recommendations in the report was a call for the government to immediately review its trade remedy system to ensure that critically valued imports, needed as inputs by companies who subsequently export products out of the country, are not unnecessarily blocked.

The standing committee was told that Canada's trade remedy system needs a different mindset, that is not to assume that all imports from China are bad because for some manufacturers such imports are critical. In fact, one witness noted that, "it's the only way they're going to be in the game."

The government intends to table responses to these recommendations shortly. It is interesting that these standing committees made identical recommendations within two months of each other, namely that the government conduct a review of Canada's trade remedy system. However, these recommendations were made for quite different reasons.

The industry committee recommends a review to ensure that Canada's trade remedy system remains effective to deal with dumped or subsidized imports. The international trade committee recommends a review to ensure that Canadian manufacturers have stable and predictable access to global supply chains.

Although these two standing committees had opposing views on the role and impact of Canada's trade remedy system on Canadian manufacturers, they made identical recommendations. Because they agree that the government must consider the trade remedy system as a whole and to take into account the view of all stakeholders before considering changes to the system, the government supports the view of the standing committees that all stakeholders must have an opportunity to put forth their views on the legislation as a whole.

SIMA has been amended several times to reflect changes in international agreements and to implement the recommendations of the 1996 parliamentary review. However, there has never been an amendment to a single provision of the legislation without broader consideration being taken into account.

Bill C-411 would have us take a piecemeal approach to the Special Import Measures Act that would be contrary to ensuring this law reflects a proper balance of interests.

• (1815)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on Bill C-411, An Act to amend the Special Import Measures Act (domestic prices), which is commonly referred to as SIMA.

The mover of the bill raised some very important questions with which parliamentarians must deal with from time to time. To give some indication of that, the implications to Quebec have been very serious in some areas, particularly, as she mentioned, textiles, garments, furniture, bicycles and forestry and the tens of thousands of jobs being lost as a consequence of activity with regard to the importation of goods and the competition.

She talked very well about the whole concept of dumping, which is an illegal activity where a country will actually export goods to Canada at a price that is less than its own production costs, which obviously puts our own producers at a significant disadvantage.

Clearly that kind of activity could be extremely damaging to Canada if we did not have rules, regulations and legislation to guide us in determining whether that kind of activity exists. We do in fact have it and the Special Import Measures Act is the instrument.

The particular section which the member wants to deal with, and I think it is important simply for the information of members and those who are watching, is section 20(1) in the Special Import Measures Act.

Let me just review a couple of things and members will see how this is a very complicated area. It states:

Where goods sold to an importer in Canada are shipped directly to Canada
(a) from a prescribed country where, in the opinion of the President—

—and "the President" refers to the president of the Canada Border Services Agency—

—domestic prices are substantially determined by the government of that country and there is sufficient reason to believe that they are not substantially the same as they would be if they were determined in a competitive market, or

Therefore, as a principle, are we having dumping at a price lower than production would be an example.

Also, it covers coming:

(b) from any other country where, in the opinion of the President,

(i) the government of that country has a monopoly or substantial monopoly in its export trade, and

(ii) domestic prices are substantially determined by the government of that country and there is sufficient reason to believe that they are not substantially the same as they would be if they were determined in a competitive market,

Those are the principles that must guide the president of CBSA.

I asked for some information about the specifics.

I should elaborate on the Special Import Measures Act. SIMA provides for the rules and the procedures for anti-dumping and countervailing duty actions under Canadian domestic law. The act is designed to provide protection to Canadian producers who are being harmed or injured by dumping or subsidizing goods imported into Canada. The member has raised a number of examples affecting Quebec industries.

I should also mention that I had the same situation in my own riding where back in 2004 there was an investigation with regard to the importation of bicycles from China which were hurting the bicycle industry. We have a thriving bicycle industry in my area.

The SIMA is administered by the Canada Border Services Agency and the Canadian International Trade Tribunal. The Canada Border Services Agency conducts investigations into dumping and subsidies and implements duties on dumped or some subsidized goods. That is its job.

The CITT, the Canadian International Trade Tribunal, conducts inquiries on the harm to Canadian businesses and industries from dumping and subsidies on imported goods.

• (1820)

The investigations are initiated after a formal complaint by a Canadian producer or group of producers. Inquiries are initiated after a formal complaint by a Canadian producer or group of producers and the recommendation comes from the president of the Canada Border Services Agency.

The determination of dumping or subsidies is based on a baseline price for similar goods. The baseline is called “normal value” and that is defined in some detail in the Special Import Measures Act. It is used by both the CBSA and the CITT during their investigations and inquiries. SIMA contains extensive rules for determining normal value, which are found in sections 15 to 23.1 and sections 29 to 30 of the act.

Bill C-411, introduced by the member to amend the Special Import Measures Act, changes the rules for determining normal value where an export monopoly exists in the exporting country for the good. Specifically, the bill deems foreign countries to have an export monopoly if certain criteria are not met. This bill changes the criteria and is proposing certain conditions that in fact change the definition of normal value.

The bill states in clause 2 that the lack of any of the factors listed will result in the country being deemed to be an export monopoly. This amendment would prevent these countries from being used as a reference for determining normal value and would allow the CBSA or the CITT to utilize the formula in paragraph 20(1)(c) for determining normal value.

I could probably put on the record some of the other details, but suffice it to say that this is not a simple matter, as members can see. We are not talking about a linear industry. We are not talking about just one sector of the economy. We are talking about the vast trade relationship that we have with countries around the world. Canada is a very active trader.

Let me simply summarize by saying that the bill seeks to codify conditions used to determine if an export monopoly exists in a given country. It does this by outlining five conditions which if they were not met would automatically result in a country being deemed to be an export monopoly.

This bill in fact is not necessary. I know the member has heard this before. The bill the member has put forward is redundant because it seeks to tell the president of the Canada Border Services Agency how to do his job. The president of the CBSA is the one who

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currently makes these determinations under the existing legislation called SIMA.

The categories are broad and could conceivably result in almost any country being designated as having an export monopoly. This includes the United States and the European Union, which the CBSA already relies on to determine normal value and normal market prices. This again impairs the ability of the CBSA and the Canadian International Trade Tribunal to do their jobs.

The legislation clearly lays out their authorities to protect the interests of businesses, but it is up to the businesses and groups of producers to make their case to have the prescribed investigation and inquiries made to determine under the legislation whether or not there is a matter of dumping to be addressed.

The concerns that the bill purports to address can already be addressed through a variety of mechanisms, including existing trade agreements and in trade tribunals. These issues are better addressed during trade negotiations.

Therefore, the Liberal Party is not going to be able to support this bill. We have always advocated that trade agreements are the way to seek a fair balance. We understand the importance of real free trade, which is why we are advocating that the government ensure that the proposed South Korea free trade deal effectively eliminate non-tariff and regulatory barriers that keep Canadian manufacturers, specifically in the automotive sector, from having open market access.

Although we will not be supporting the bill, I want to congratulate the member for bringing forward to the House yet another important matter in regard to which it is the responsibility of parliamentarians to inform themselves about and to assure their constituents and their businesses that there are rules in place and that we will respond where there is an investigation or inquiry that identifies areas where there is anti-dumping activity that hurts Canadian business.

• (1825)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-411, introduced by the member for Terrebonne—Blainville. This is a very important bill to deal with what is really going on in the main areas affected.

The currently reality in the manufacturing sector cannot be ignored. Earlier, the Conservatives and the Liberals said that this was not a problem and that they would stay on the same course. To do so would mean ignoring the reality facing workers across Canada.

• (1830)

[*English*]

The NDP will be supporting this bill because we understand that there is a manufacturing crisis going on in this country right now.

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I would like to preface my comments in English by quoting somebody who spoke in the House in regard to this very issue of dumping cheap imports and the loss of Canadian jobs that result. I will read it verbatim:

A Conservative government would stand up for Canadian workers and work proactively through international trade policies to ensure Canada competes on a level playing field.

That was said just before the last election in regard to protecting against the dumping of cheap imports and the loss of Canadian jobs that resulted. Who said that? It was the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, the same individual who just a few minutes ago stood up in this House and said that we do not need to do this, that we have to review SIMA because it is difficult and complicated. Before the last election he was not saying that. He was saying exactly the contrary. He was saying that there is a crisis in manufacturing jobs, that there is a problem. It is important for the Canadian public to understand what the Conservatives said before the election and what they are saying now. He said, "A Conservative government would stand up for Canadian workers".

I could not agree more with the comment from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade except that the new government is acting exactly like the old government. It is doing exactly the same thing as the Liberals did while jobs are hemorrhaging out of this country.

In the textile and clothing industry alone, 50,000 jobs have been lost in the last five years. That is why the Conservatives made that commitment. The situation is no better. In fact, it is worse.

For the Conservatives now to say that it is very complicated, as the Liberals said before, just shows that there is not a whole lot of difference between the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party when it comes to governing. Perhaps that is why so many people, including those in Outremont, Quebec, are looking to the NDP, because we are actually in favour of taking action to protect Canadian jobs.

Fifty thousand jobs in the textile and clothing industry have been lost. I wear proudly my Canadian-made suit. I wonder how many members from the Conservative Party are wearing Canadian-made suits.

Let us look right across the country at the number of jobs that have been lost.

Between 2002 and 2007, nearly 300,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost. That means 300,000 families have lost a breadwinner, and the Conservatives say it is complicated and difficult and they cannot take any action. Those 300,000 families have lost a breadwinner because of the inaction of the Liberals and the inaction of the Conservatives.

We disagree when the government says it cannot take action and stop the dumping of imports. A framework has to be put into place. The government has to take action. A Liberal member said we should not tell government agencies how to do their job. Those agencies are not doing their job and that is the problem. That is why we have lost hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs.

What has been the result? Just two weeks ago we saw figures from Statistics Canada. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade knows these figures very well because I told him. I mentioned them at the international trade committee, not with any effect yet, but I am hoping to convince Conservatives that they cannot just keep doing things the way the Liberals did.

Since 1989, with the loss of those hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs, two-thirds of Canadian families, 66% of Canadian families, have actually seen their real incomes go down, not up. They are actually earning less. We have seen overtime go up over one-third. Canadians are working longer hours. We have seen the debt load of the average Canadian family almost double.

Since 1989, since the signing of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, middle class families have actually lost one week of salary on average across the country. Lower middle class families have lost two weeks of salary. The poorest of Canadian families have seen their incomes collapse. They have lost six weeks of salary.

● (1835)

Canadian families are struggling more and more with less and less money in their pockets. Their real incomes have fallen for the exact reason that the good quality jobs are being washed away. Jobs are hemorrhaging out of this country and neither the Liberals nor the Conservatives have been willing to do even one thing to take action to address this crucial issue.

We are talking about Quebec, we are talking about Ontario, we are talking about British Columbia and other provinces across the country where this hemorrhaging of good jobs has led to a fall in real incomes for most Canadian families. Why would a government not then say that very clearly we have an income crisis and a job crisis when it comes to quality jobs? People are working part time and in temporary jobs. They are trying to make ends meet that way. We have a prosperity gulf, an income crisis in this country and yet the Conservatives continue to say that we simply cannot do anything to address this issue.

I come back to Bill C-411. Essentially the bill puts into place some additional mechanisms to ensure that we have protection against the dumping of cheap imports. If we look at the criteria, it is quite clear that these are market driven definitions.

The NDP is very clear that there are some areas that should not be in the market at all. We believe in public health care and reinforcing our public health care system. We believe very strongly in that. That is why we have the quality of public health care that we have today in Canada. It is because of Tommy Douglas and because of the work of the NDP. Without the NDP, we would have no public health care in this country, and like the U.S., we would be spending twice as much per capita for a system that would leave millions of Canadians with absolutely no health care protection whatsoever.

We believe there are areas that need to be protected by the public sector, but we also believe that there is a role for the private sector. When there are market driven mechanisms for certain private sector instruments, we support the market. Yet the Conservatives and Liberals are saying that they do not support those market mechanisms, that somehow they cannot provide market based definitions for the dumping of cheap imports.

We have an anomaly here. The NDP is standing up defending the market and Canadian jobs and the Conservatives and Liberals are saying, "No, we cannot have market based definitions to protect Canada against dumping". They are of one mind. We have seen this with the throne speech. The Conservatives and Liberals sound alike and they think alike. They do the same things and essentially in both cases they are refusing to apply market based mechanisms to ensure that we are protecting Canadian jobs against the dumping that is taking place.

Here is the paradox. We have a manufacturing job crisis. Hundreds of thousands of jobs have been lost. We have an income crisis. Most Canadian families, two-thirds of those that are watching us tonight, have actually seen their real incomes fall since 1989, since the signing of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. CanWest Global may disagree, but that is the reality which Statistics Canada tells us about. Most Canadian families have seen their incomes fall and yet the Conservatives and Liberals want to do their favourite action, their favourite remedy, which is to do nothing.

We in this corner of the House in the NDP, in our growing caucus, believe we have to do something and we have to apply these market based mechanisms as defined in Bill C-411 to protect Canadian jobs, Canadian workers and Canadian communities. That is why we are supporting this legislation.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this evening I would like to discuss Bill C-411. I would like to thank my colleague from Terrebonne—Blainville for introducing this bill.

I want to talk about this bill in the context of the throne speech debate, a debate in which the Conservative Party has placed itself on a pedestal and the Liberal Party is bowing down before it.

Despite these peculiar circumstances, we still want to work for Quebec and for Canada; we want to save jobs in Quebec and in Canada.

Nevertheless, I would like to say a few words about the Speech from the Throne. The government claims to be concerned about the crisis, but it has not proposed any real action to revive the industry, nor has it come up with an assistance program for older workers who have been laid off.

I would like to quote part of the Speech from the Throne:

Our government will stand up for Canada's traditional industries. Key sectors including forestry, fisheries, manufacturing and tourism are facing challenges. Our government has taken action to support workers as these industries adjust to global conditions and will continue to do so in the next session.

Who does the government think it is fooling when it says things like that in the Speech from the Throne? It has done nothing at all about the crisis in the forestry industry. We know exactly what it did.

Even though the courts ruled in Canada's favour with respect to the forestry industry, the Conservatives still paid the United States so that the destruction of the industry could go on.

I would also like to mention the report tabled by the Standing Committee on International Trade several months ago. The report urged the government to lift all barriers to free trade with China even though Quebec imports ten times more goods from China than it

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exports to China. The report recommends weakening trade laws to make things easier for importers and ignores the fact that producers are currently suffering from fierce and often unfair competition. The government wanted to bring down supply management in agricultural industries even though the system assures farmers of a decent income at no cost to consumers or the government.

With respect to supply management, I will come back to the Speech from the Throne in a future debate in an effort to clarify the government's hidden agenda.

Supply management is very important to Quebec in the manufacturing sector. Manufactured goods account for 60% of its GDP and 85% of its exports. In Alberta, for instance, manufacturing accounts for only 6.7% of GDP. There are obviously some Conservative members who do not want the legislation on special import measures changed in order to help our companies survive under particularly trying circumstances. It is true that things are difficult all over the world, but that is no reason to let people get away with unfair and even illegal practices.

Earlier I heard the Secretary of State say that he was mostly concerned about people who import. He wants to see Canadian importers paying as little as possible, even if the prices are illegal and unfair and a result of dumping by certain emerging countries. All we want is to ensure that the rules of the game are clear, honest and transparent. There are some countries that practice dumping and we should ensure that this practice is clearly identified and steps are taken here to impose countervailing duties on dumping.

● (1840)

The United States accused us of dumping and unfair practices in the case of softwood lumber. We paid duties. But we were found to be in the right. We were not dumping. Unfortunately, though, we are the victims of dumping in Canada and Quebec.

Both the parliamentary secretary and the Liberal Party representative told us that we should just use what already exists and the companies should just go out and defend themselves.

Our hon. colleague from Shefford gave a good example, the Raleigh bicycle case. The International Trade Tribunal found that the company was right and that there was dumping. The industry minister at the time, just before becoming Minister of International Affairs, simply said that it was not very serious, this company and its jobs were not very important, there was no problem and people would just get to pay less for their bicycles. I repeat: these are unfair, illegal practices.

The government is making itself complicit, therefore, in these practices. I even suppose they would be prepared to use such practices themselves, although we would obviously be opposed.

We must recognize that Canada is not alone in this. It seems that the government does not want to play by the same rules as other countries. We need only look to the United States or the European Union, which apply similar criteria. In fact, rather than having 17 goods subject to anti-dumping measures, as Canada does, these countries have three times that number. I do not know how many different products China manufactures, but 17 is not very many.

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More stringent criteria are needed to demonstrate a willingness to identify these dumping practices. It goes without saying that jobs must be protected. We are not talking about protecting them for all eternity, but a responsible government—or one that claims to be—must provide these industries with the means to develop, to compete with other countries and to increase their productivity. Thus, policies must be developed while these countervailing duties, these antidumping duties, are in place.

It is obvious that the government does not wish to move in that direction. However, we must stop underestimating the fair value of goods.

As I said earlier, Bill C-411 lists the criteria to be used in determining whether a business is really growing in a market-based economy. We know that China had a command economy for some time. Then China joined the WTO and there was talk of a transitional market. Canada hastened to recognize it as a market-based economy. Now it is letting things slide and is reluctant to establish the criteria that would enable us to identify products that have been dumped on the market.

Instances of commercial dumping can be proven if solid criteria, such as those proposed here, are in place. However, there is something even worse. The Conservative government is way behind on this issue and so are the Liberals. Social dumping scorns human rights and is heedless of the environment, and we have to start thinking about it now. We have a long way to go, and that is what I want to talk to the government about: social dumping.

The government has to start trying to understand that commercial dumping is happening. It has to pass Bill C-411 so that we can have solid criteria that will help businesses in Canada and Quebec.

•(1845)

[English]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise to speak to the private member's bill tabled by the member for Terrebonne—Blainville.

Bill C-411 proposes an amendment to section 20 of the Special Import Measures Act, which would set out the conditions required for deeming whether domestic prices in a country are substantially determined by the government of that country and whether there is sufficient reason to believe that they are not substantially the same as they would be if they were determined in a competitive market.

I will take this opportunity to briefly outline the key aspects of Canada's trade remedy system, of which the Special Import Measures Act, or SIMA, is the principal legal instrument.

SIMA governs the application of anti-dumping and countervailing duties to imports of dumped or subsidized goods that are found to cause injury to domestic producers. In just a quick primer, anti-dumping duties are additional duties designed to offset an exporter's underpricing in an importing country's market, whereas countervailing duties are designed to offset the effects of foreign subsidies on imported products.

Under SIMA, a Canadian industry is entitled to trade remedy protection if it is established, through a formal investigation, that the imports are being dumped or subsidized and that such has caused or

threatens to cause injury. In such a case, definitive anti-dumping or countervailing duties are normally levied on all imported goods for a period of five years, with the possibility of an extension if Canada's administering authorities, the Canada Border Services Agency and the Canadian International Trade Tribunal, determine that there is likely to be a continuation or a recurrence of dumping or subsidization and injury if the duties are removed.

Canada operates in a bifurcated trade remedies system under SIMA. The Canada Border Services Agency is responsible for initiating investigations and making preliminary and final determinations respecting dumping and/or subsidizing or the goods in question. The Canadian International Trade Tribunal, a quasi-judicial body, is responsible for determining whether the dumped or subsidized goods have caused or threatened to cause injury to a Canadian industry.

SIMA implements Canada's rights and obligations under two World Trade Organization agreements: the WTO anti-dumping agreement and the WTO agreement on subsidies and countervailing measures. Key provisions of these agreements include methods for determining the existence of dumping and countervailing subsidies, requirements for the initiation of investigations, obligations respecting the procedural fairness, the duration of orders and transparency in decision-making. In addition, these agreements set out the economic factors to be considered in determining whether injury exists and whether or not such injury is caused by dumping or subsidized imports.

I will take this opportunity to describe another important component of Canada's trade remedy system, safeguard measures.

Canada, like many trading nations, has legislation that allows the application of important safeguard measures to protect domestic producers that have suffered or are threatened by serious injury from increased levels of fairly traded imports. This legislation implements Canada's rights and obligations under the World Trade Organization agreement on safeguards, which establishes the conditions for applying important safeguard measures as well as notification in consultation procedures for safeguard inquiries and measures.

The CITT conducts important safeguard inquiries under the authority of the act. While the CITT may initiate import safeguard inquiries following a complaint by domestic producers, the government may also direct the tribunal to conduct important safeguard inquiries.

In a global safeguard inquiry, the CITT considers the effects of imports from all sources on domestic producers. The object of the inquiry is to determine whether a product is being imported into Canada in such increased quantities and under such conditions as to cause, or threaten to cause, serious injury to domestic producers of like or directly competitive goods.

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If the CITT makes an injury determination, the government may apply important safeguard measures in the form of surtaxes under the customs tariff or in the form of quantitative restrictions under the Export and Import Permits Act.

•(1850)

There is another type of safeguard mechanism available to Canadian industry that applies only to goods imported from China. This safeguard came into effect on September 30, 2002, to

implement the safeguard provisions of the 2001 protocol on the accession of China to the World Trade Organization.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): The hon. member will have five minutes left to finish his remarks the next time the bill comes before the House.

It being 6:54 p.m. the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:54 p.m.)

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