



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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VOLUME 142 • NUMBER 069 • 2nd SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, April 1, 2008**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

## **CONTENTS**

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, April 1, 2008

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)  
[English]

### INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

**Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group respecting its participation at the National Governors Association winter meeting in Washington, D.C., from February 23 to 25.

**The Speaker:** I see the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader rising. I think he will be asking for unanimous consent to revert to tabling of documents. Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ)** moved for leave to introduce C-529, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (durable life date).

She said: Mr. Speaker, as the Bloc Québécois' critic for health, I want to introduce today to the House a private member's bill to amend the Food and Drugs Act. The bill's objective is to prohibit the sale of prepackaged or canned food that does not indicate a durable life date.

Right after Nutrition Month during which we celebrated World Consumer Rights Day, and on the very day the Canadian Food

Inspection Agency admits that unsafe food can find its way onto the market, it is crucial to base all federal regulations concerning labelling of food products on comprehensive information that allows consumers to make healthy and safe food choices. That is the goal of this bill.

I call on all members to support the bill because, as protectors of the public interest and as informed consumers, they are doubly accountable.

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

\* \* \*

[English]

## PETITIONS

### HUMAN TRAFFICKING

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today I would like to present petitions from across Canada. The petitioners are asking that the government continue its good work to stop the horrendous crime of human trafficking. As we know, this is a crime that is having a rising impact on Canadians. It is my honour to present these petitions today in this House.

### UNBORN VICTIMS OF CRIME

**Mr. Ken Epp (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to again rise in the House to present more petitions on Bill C-484. This bill has immense support out there. Every day, I am getting a thousand or more names on petitions in support of the bill. This time, they come all the way from Kelowna to Kanata, from all points in between, and from points beyond.

I am very pleased to present this petition in which the petitioners ask that Parliament enact legislation to protect and recognize unborn children when the mother wants them. It is very clear to them what the meaning is. I hope parliamentarians pick up on that.

\* \* \*

## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*Business of Supply***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[Translation]

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

OPPOSITION MOTION—COMPLIANCE WITH THE CHARTER OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE REGARDING ENTERPRISES UNDER FEDERAL JURISDICTION LOCATED IN QUEBEC

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ)** moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, following the recognition of the Quebec nation by this House, the government should move from words to deeds and propose measures to solidify that recognition, including compliance with the language of labour relations of Quebec's Charter of the French language regarding enterprises under federal jurisdiction located in Quebec.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to open the debate on this motion, which I will read again—and I thank the member for Québec for her support.

That, in the opinion of the House, following the recognition of the Quebec nation by this House, the government should move from words to deeds and propose measures to solidify that recognition, including compliance with the language of labour relations of Quebec's Charter of the French language regarding enterprises under federal jurisdiction located in Quebec.

In bringing forward this motion, the Bloc Québécois is doing again today the work for which, since 1993, election after election, Quebeckers have been sending a majority of Bloc members to Ottawa, that is to represent them in the House of Commons.

At the outset, let me remind members of this House and everyone who is watching us that we are sovereignists. The Bloc Québécois is convinced that the best way for the Quebec nation to take control of its overall development, be it from a political, economic, social, environmental or cultural point of view, is to achieve sovereignty.

Being sovereignists, we are the only ones in this House who can defend without any compromise the interests and values of the Quebec nation. This work performed by the Bloc Québécois is directly related to our party's mandate, which is to promote Quebec's sovereignty. All other parties in the House, whether it is the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party or the New Democratic Party, are Canadian parties that represent the interests and values of the Canadian nation. The only party capable of representing exclusively the interests and values of the Quebec nation is the Bloc Québécois.

It happens sometimes that both the Canadian and Quebec nations share common interests and it is indeed possible for a Canadian party to agree with the Bloc Québécois, or vice versa, to defend a particular cause, whether it deals with social, political or environmental issues.

I know that the debates within the Canadian parties reflect the debates going on within the Canadian nation. For example, the Liberals and the NDP have been able to work with the Bloc Québécois on some measures concerning compliance with the Kyoto protocol. But when the interests of the Quebec nation differ from those of the Canadian nation, it is amazing to see how the three Canadian parties can unite, despite their ideological differences, to defend the interests and values of the Canadian nation, at the expense of the interests and values of the Quebec nation. We must remember that in this House, we are the only exclusively Quebec party that represents the Quebec nation and that is able to defend its interests and values.

Because we are a sovereignist party, we want to facilitate Quebec's transition from provincial to country status. That is why, unlike what a number of federalists believe, we do not attempt to block things, as some of my colleagues like to joke. On the contrary, we think that the more progress Quebec makes within the Canadian federation, the stronger it will become, and therefore there will be a greater appetite for sovereignty among the people of Quebec and within the Quebec nation.

Unlike what some columnists and members of this House think, the Bloc Québécois, the Quebec nation, and all of Quebec have an interest in making progress within Canadian Parliament, and this is what the Bloc has been working towards since 1993. Having the House of Commons recognize Quebec as a nation on November 27, 2006, was a victory for the Bloc Québécois, for Quebec and for all Quebeckers, federalists and sovereignists alike, and it also helps Quebec's transition towards sovereignty.

I remind members that during discussions, people ask us why the House of Commons recognized the Quebec nation. First of all, the Quebec nation did not need to be recognized by the House of Commons in order to exist.

● (1010)

It existed already. All of Quebec's civil society is well aware of that fact. The National Assembly had already adopted motions to this effect. We did not need the House's recognition in order to exist. I am always delighted to say, since it is the truth, that the Canadian government is the first foreign government to have recognized the Quebec nation. When Quebeckers make a decision about their future, I expect the Canadian nation, through its Parliament, to accept the democratic choice Quebeckers have made and not to interfere with the democratically expressed will of the Quebec nation to achieve sovereignty. In that context, the decision made on November 27, 2006 is very important for the Bloc Québécois.

We now need to give this motion tangible form, and that is where the problems begin. Clearly, many of the members who voted for this motion—265 voted in favour of the House recognizing the Quebec nation, and 16 voted against—thought it was a symbolic recognition, except obviously the Bloc members. In fact, it is not really clear. Who did we recognize? Did we recognize the Quebec nation, French Canadians in Quebec or the whole Quebec nation as Quebeckers perceive it? That debate seems to have taken place amongst the federalists, but not amongst the Quebec federalists and in Quebec society as a whole.

*Business of Supply*

Now we have to move from words to deeds, which means many things. My fellow Bloc Québécois member for Drummond tabled a bill about the Canada Labour Code and the application of the Charter of the French Language for employees working in businesses under federal jurisdiction in Quebec. This bill would ensure that they have the same privileges and benefits as all workers in Quebec, meaning that they can work in their language, French, within Quebec society and within the borders of Quebec. This bill is currently being examined in the House.

Another bill has been introduced about multiculturalism, because the Canadian Multiculturalism Act is an obstacle, an impediment. It runs flatly counter to Quebec's vision regarding the integration of newcomers. That bill seeks to exempt Quebec from the Canadian Multiculturalism Act so that Quebec can fully develop its integration model for newcomers. I will come back to this.

It goes even farther than that. Recognition of the Quebec nation must also start with a permanent resolution of the fiscal imbalance. It is not true that the fiscal imbalance has been resolved. Everyone in Quebec agrees on this. The National Assembly, Action Démocratique—the Prime Minister's friends—and its leader, Mario Dumont, Jean Charest, Monique Jérôme-Forget, the Parti Québécois, Ms. Marois and François Legault have reiterated this: the fiscal imbalance has not been resolved. Recognizing the Quebec nation therefore also means recognizing the permanent resolution of the fiscal imbalance, so that the National Assembly—the Quebec nation—has all of the economic and financial tools for implementing the decisions it democratically makes, which is not the case at present.

How many years did we have to fight to get back the job training measures? It took over 30 years. We got them back largely because of the Bloc Québécois members and the pressure brought to bear by all parties in the National Assembly and by unions and employers in Quebec. After a pointless 30-year battle, we got what was owing to us in the first place.

The same thing applies to the fiscal imbalance: it will never be resolved as long as the federal government does not give up its power to spend in areas under Quebec's jurisdiction. That means the right for Quebec to withdraw with full compensation and no strings attached. Everyone wants that, but the government refuses to do it. We have seen two or three times before references made in the budget to measures relating to eliminating the spending power in shared-cost programs. Not any more.

No one is fooled when we look at what is going on here. The Canadian parties really do not want to give the Quebec nation the opportunity to give tangible expression to all of the powers it should have, through the decisions that would be made here. It is extremely important to point out that identity bills have in fact been introduced. We will be coming back to them. But there are also financial and economic factors to be considered.

•(1015)

I would also add that the development model that the government is adopting impoverishes Quebec and the Quebec nation. A development model based on oil or the oil sands, which are in fact major greenhouse gas producers, impoverishes Quebec because Quebec imports all of its oil. In Quebec, we want to develop a model that no longer depends on oil, or that depends less and less on it.

This runs counter to the interests of the Canadian nation, because that is very clearly what drives the Canadian economy.

As can be seen, this is very far-reaching. Before returning to the bills or examples dealing more specifically with Quebec's identity, I want to say that we need to give concrete expression to the recognition of the Quebec nation, not just on the financial and economic levels but also in regard to its international aspirations. Do not say that progress has been made at UNESCO because it has been shown and proved that nothing has changed insofar as Quebec's UNESCO delegation is concerned. It consists of a public servant who is on the delegation but does not have any real powers, and when Quebec and Canada disagree, it is the Government of Canada that wins out. The only progress that has been made is an administrative memorandum that is sent to Quebec explaining the reasons for the disagreement.

This motion is extremely important, therefore, and I would not want to see anyone try to trivialize it. Moving from words to deeds is not limited to the example given in the motion, that is to say, the application of the Charter of the French language to employees under federal jurisdiction, which would entail changes to the Canada Labour Code. It is also a question of recognizing that multiculturalism is a hindrance to our method of integrating newcomers into Quebec society. It also means recognizing that there is a Quebec culture, with which the Government of Canada is still not very familiar. This can be seen in the way budgets are handled. They speak about francophones and anglophones. But that is not the Quebec reality. There is an anglophone linguistic minority in Quebec, but it is an integral part of the Quebec nation and we fight for it too here in the House. There is a common language, though, and it is French. Multiculturalism policies based on bilingualism are a hindrance, therefore, to Quebec's integration model.

We should recognize Quebec's culture, therefore, and also give it the tools it needs. This means transferring responsibility for such things as telecommunications, all radio and television broadcasting, and all the new information technologies to the Government of Quebec—something that Duplessis was already demanding back in the days when radio was starting to become an important means of communication.

This is, therefore, a very significant, very far-reaching motion. We hope it will pass because we think that all the progress that is made will help to further strengthen the nation of Quebec and Quebec society and this gathering strength will give them an ever increasing appetite for sovereignty. Finally, this progress will facilitate Quebec's transition from the status of a province to a country. As I said earlier, we hope in all sincerity, therefore, that the Canadian parties will pass this motion and, by so doing, respond favourably to the requests I have been making.

*Business of Supply*

In the little time that is left, I want to return to the specific example provided in the motion. In our view, the thrust of the motion is to move from words to deeds and solidify the recognition of the Quebec nation. This is a very far-reaching subject involving major changes to the relations between Quebec and Canada. As I have been saying, though, we wanted to provide just an example here, namely, when it comes to the language of labour relations, the Charter of the French language should apply to employees of companies under federal jurisdiction located in Quebec.

This specific example was used because a bill has already been tabled by my colleague from Drummond—I mentioned that—to ensure that the members of this House will have an opportunity to give solid form to the recognition of the Québécois nation, in this field at first.

• (1020)

It is completely unfair that employees and workers in businesses under federal jurisdiction do not have the same rights as workers who are governed by the Quebec Labour Code. That is totally anomalous. How can one explain that 275,000 workers in Quebec do not have the right to work in French? That is what the Charter of the French Language does. It enables francophones and others who want to work in French to do so. I know very well what they are going to tell me. It is what the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages has replied several times: that they are promoting both of Canada's official languages, French and English. That is the illusion. The reality is something else. Everyone knows it and, once again, the statistics are available. Based on the 2006 census, Statistics Canada has shown that the French language is in decline everywhere else in Canada and is very fragile in Quebec.

Thus, the federal government should send a very important message, namely, that it recognizes that, since French is the common language of the Québécois nation, and its sole official language, workers should have the right to work in French in Quebec. Yet, that is not the case. I know people who work in airports and, who, as part of their work, are obliged to speak English. People who work in banks must often work in English. That is not normal and it sends a very bad message.

Between now and the end of April, we will have a chance to debate a bill on this subject at third reading and to adopt it. It is extremely important to send a message that the Canadian nation understands very clearly that the Québécois nation, for whom French is the official language, the common language, needs a little, additional symbolic support. We are talking about 275,000 workers. This is not a revolution. We need this little, additional support to reinvigorate the role of the French language among the people of Quebec. Unfortunately, an examination of the figures from the latest surveys was not conclusive regarding the possibility that there has been some stagnation in the efforts to promote French, especially in business.

Yesterday, moreover, the Quebec Minister of Immigration announced new measures relating to this. Even with these new measures in place, we will run into problems if we remain within the framework of Canadian multiculturalism, with two different discourses: one promoting bilingualism and the other French as

the common language. This has created confusion and will continue to create confusion. It will weaken the efforts of the Quebec nation to ensure the harmonious integration of newcomers.

Perhaps the Minister of Labour will tell us it is extremely complicated to ensure application of the Charter of the French language to enterprises under federal jurisdiction. It is not all that complicated. Firstly because, as I have said, we are dealing with 275,000 workers in sectors that are extremely strategic to the economic future of Quebec. These include aerospace, telecommunications and the financial sector. These are sectors where French ought indeed to be the predominant language of work.

Taking as my example, the matter of minimum wage, if it were as complicated as all that, I would have trouble understanding how agreement was reached through administrative provisions to bring the minimum wage for enterprises under federal jurisdiction in line with the Quebec minimum wage set by the Government of Quebec, the Commission des normes du travail. So it is possible technically. What is lacking at the present time is the political will.

Let us hope that recognition of the Quebec nation will be solidified by real actions, such as adoption of this motion, of the bill tabled by my colleague for Drummond, of the multiculturalism bill introduced by myself which will be debated in April, and of other bills to be introduced by the Bloc Québécois. Otherwise, everyone in Quebec will understand what a number of us already suspect: that what was done in November 2006 was nothing but a political ploy and not any true recognition of the Quebec nation. The basis of the Canadian problem is that Canadians and their political representatives have never accepted the fact that other nations exist within the Canadian political landscape. The Quebec nation, the first nations, the Acadian nation, all these are nations with their own specific characteristics.

• (1025)

Given this non-recognition of the Quebec nation by the Canadian nation, the bottom line for the Bloc Québécois is that the only real solution remains the sovereignty and independence of Quebec.

**Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in his speech, the member for Joliette mentioned Bill C-482. This Bloc bill would amend the Canada Labour Code to make sure that companies doing business in Quebec, which are already subject to the federal act, would also be subject to the Quebec's Charter of the French Language. However, section 34 of Part V of the Official Languages Act states that:

English and French are the languages of work in all federal institutions, and officers and employees of all federal institutions have the right to use either official language in accordance with this Part.

What does the member for Joliette have to say in response to the concerns expressed by the Commissioner of Official Languages, Mr. Graham Fraser, who said that this bill could threaten English-speaking minority rights, particularly in the area of service delivery?

*Business of Supply*

• (1030)

**Mr. Pierre Paquette:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for this question which allows me to make it very clear that we are talking about private businesses that are covered by the Canada Labour Code and not about the entire federal public service. There is separate legislation covering that aspect. However, we are not dealing with that act, but rather with private businesses that are under federal jurisdiction, a sector that includes 275,000 workers in areas like airports, banks, interprovincial transportation and telecommunications.

We must understand that what we are giving here is only a right to work in French. It is not a matter of forcing all workers to work in French. This has to be very clear. Since the majority of the Quebec population is French speaking, the French language should of course be the language used at work. We are however talking about rights and not about obligations regarding the Charter of the French Language.

As far as the Commissioner of Official Languages' comments are concerned, I would say that he had misread the bill introduced by the Bloc Québécois, that again only deals with private businesses under federal jurisdiction.

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me this opportunity to participate in the debate. I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary for Official Languages and member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to a motion calling on the government to take action that is at odds with the scope and purpose of existing federal legislation.

I would like to focus my comments on the proposed amendments to the Canada Labour Code and how they are predicated upon an obvious misunderstanding of the Canada Labour Code and its intent, or, in practical terms, what can and cannot be done under the Canada Labour Code.

I would point out that these amendments were put forward previously under private member's Bill C-482, which asks that "any federal work, undertaking or business carrying on activities in Quebec [be] subject to the requirements of the Charter of the French Language".

What is the purpose of the Canada Labour Code? It comprises three parts. Part 1 deals with labour relations; part 2 addresses occupational health and safety and part 3 concerns labour standards. Let us take a more detailed look at that last part.

It would certainly be a first in labour law history if such a measure were adopted by the House. The Bloc Québécois motion, that is. Indeed, to my knowledge, no labour code, not even at the provincial level, covers language rights. Not even the Quebec Labour Code refers to language. Like the Canada Labour Code, it deals exclusively with labour issues.

I want to be unequivocal here to leave no room for confusion: the Canada Labour Code deals exclusively with labour issues. Language

is not its business. The federal government has other, more appropriate laws in place to address questions of language.

When it comes to the Canada Labour Code, the proposed changes are therefore completely inappropriate given the purpose of this legislation. For this reason, we cannot condone the measures being put forward by our well-intentioned but misguided colleagues today.

What can the Canada Labour Code do? I think we should spend a few minutes reviewing what the code can do for employers and workers in federally-regulated industries such as the banking, communications and rail, sea, air and interprovincial transportation sectors. All these sectors are federally regulated. The Canada Labour Code is a critical piece of legislation with an important mandate.

The code is applied equally and consistently within all provinces and territories of Canada—including Quebec—to all the businesses I mentioned earlier operating under federal jurisdiction. The Canada Labour Code serves and protects workers in Nova Scotia and British Columbia in exactly the same way that it serves and protects workers in Quebec. Similarly, each province and territory has its own labour legislation to support both employers and employees who fall under their particular jurisdiction.

In Quebec, the Canada Labour Code protects the rights of more than 180,000 Canadian workers. Across Canada, almost 10% of Canadian workers—or 1.3 million people—are protected by the code under our federal jurisdiction.

What does the Canada Labour Code do? It defines employer and employee rights and obligations related to industrial relations, workplace health and safety, and minimum employment standards. All of these ensure that Canadians benefit from safe, healthy, fair and productive conditions of employment.

• (1035)

Proactive relationships between managers and employers foster positive workplace environments and, ultimately, benefit the bottom line of any business. This benefits both employees and employers. When working conditions are healthy because they are good, employees are happier, pleased to do their work and more productive. For the employer, there are fewer disputes and interruptions in work, which is more beneficial.

Part I of the Canada Labour Code defines good workplace relations and helps parties resolve collective bargaining and other industrial disputes. It is a key piece of legislation in defining unfair labour practices, as well as the grounds for arbitration and resolution.

Let us now talk about workplace health and safety, or Part II of the Canada Labour Code. All Canadians have the right to remain safe and healthy while on the job. Workplace health and safety is becoming more and more of an issue. It is a serious matter. An employer must take the appropriate measures to ensure that working conditions are safe or risk receiving formal legal complaints. The employer knows that he or she must take measures to guarantee a safe working environment for the employee.

*Business of Supply*

Part II provides guidance intended to prevent accidents, injuries and work-related illnesses by describing the measures employers and employees can take and regulating safety standards to minimize occupational health and safety risks.

Let us now look at Part III of the Canada Labour Code. Federal government officials, business leaders and unions have long relied on Part III of the code to negotiate fair and equitable employment standards for federally regulated employees in Canada. These standards define the minimum wage, which the Bloc Québécois mentioned earlier. Minimum wage varies from one province to the next. Not wanting to put pressure on the provinces, the federal government instead has tried to be respectful of them, and federally regulated employees who work in a province will receive the same minimum wage as established by that province or territory.

So, these standards define minimum wage, for example, overtime pay, hours of work, holidays, vacations, parental leave, layoff procedures and severance pay. This is all set out in Part III of the Canada Labour Code. It protects worker rights by informing employers of their obligation to provide at least the minimum acceptable standard in these areas by monitoring compliance.

What do we mean by compliance? All of us want good laws for the workplace. But our laws are only effective if they are respected by employers and by the public. It is not good when a law is not respected. Thus, our laws are only effective if the public complies with them and they are backed by enforcement.

Our government's approach to the enforcement of labour laws emphasizes internal responsibility and labour-management collaboration. These are the best tools we have in the modern world for achieving the results we want. To this end, we are investing in education, which presupposes the sharing of best practices. We also provide dispute resolution expertise, and conduct audits and inspections targeted to high-risk workplaces and companies.

I would like to point out that the Canada Labour Code, and the regulations and guidelines that support it, are a model of best practices for all countries around the world as they develop their own labour legislation. For example, through our labour cooperation agreements with countries in the Americas such as Chile, Costa Rica and Peru, we are providing technical assistance based on almost 60 years of experience with the Code to foster cooperation on labour issues and assist governments in legislating the protection of workers' rights.

To conclude, we should be proud of Canada's international reputation with respect to the Canada Labour Code, its legislation and its efforts to promote in other countries the best possible protection of workers' rights.

• (1040)

This issue falls outside the scope of the Canada Labour Code. Moreover, we know that people speak English in Quebec and they also have the right to receive services in the language of their choice.

Furthermore, when an employer conducts business abroad or in other provinces, it may very well be that employees have to speak English to meet the requirements of our country, which recognizes two languages: English and French.

We are presently dealing with the Canada Labour Code and we therefore deem the Bloc Québécois motion to be inappropriate.

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the labour minister's speech and think in some regards that he cannot be living on the same planet as we Quebeckers. He seems to find it hard getting on the same wavelength as the people. If the minister flew regularly out of Dorval airport, he would see that all the security officers address people in English only, at all times and without exception. He would only have to ask the person who welcomes the public to security in order to find out. This position is under federal jurisdiction, unless Mr. Duchesneau, about whom we were speaking earlier, is not any longer. Regardless of that, airport security is definitely a federal jurisdiction.

Getting back to the company that manages the security officers, I can assure the minister and he should go through Montreal to see that the public is welcomed in English only. I am talking about Montreal here and not Quebec City or Val-d'Or or Rouyn-Noranda or Sept-Îles. I mean Montreal, one of the biggest airports. People are welcomed in English. Members of the public have to start speaking French on their own, and very often, the officer has difficulty answering.

This is what the motion is aimed at. It is as simple as that. Do not start talking about effects on the Canada Labour Code or on this or that. Through our motion, we want the government to pass from words to deeds. Is the minister capable of making his troops understand that we want the motion recognizing Quebec as a nation to be clear and specific and turned into actual fact?

Another example is the National Bank or the CIBC, which is another bank. When someone phones the bank, the first person who answers on the other end of the line generally speaks English. We only need to phone and ask about our VISA accounts to find out. If this person is asked where the call centre is located, they will say it is in Montreal. If they are asked whether they speak French, they say they have certain rules to follow.

The minister should realize that the objective of the Bloc motion is to ensure that after having passed the motion recognizing Quebec as a nation, we must now move from words to deeds.

Is the minister prepared to take action—and this is in his area of jurisdiction—to ensure that people who work in the Montreal airport, for example, can welcome people and speak to them in French and to ensure as well that bank employees address clients in French, not just on the telephone but also by fax, because their faxes are generally in English? It is as simple as that.

*Business of Supply*

•(1045)

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn:** Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize that the Bloc Québécois motion has nothing to do with the Canada Labour Code. Neither the codes of the provinces and territories, nor the Canada Labour Code deal with the question of language. We are trying to ensure that services are provided in both official languages across the country. Therefore, when there is sufficient demand for service in either official language, we should provide those services.

Indeed, no employer in Quebec would want to provide service only in English if his customers spoke only French. Otherwise, he would not be in business very long.

Certainly, there are always exceptions. I hope that if the member arrives at the Montreal airport and someone speaks to him in English, he will remind that person that they are in Quebec and they should speak French. I hope he will make a point of doing so and ensuring that he receives service in his own language.

Earlier, I listened to the members of the Bloc Québécois boasting that recognition of the Quebec nation constituted a victory for them. It was not the Bloc Québécois that recognized the Quebec nation in this House; rather, it was the Conservative Party. We, the ministers and members from Quebec, did what was necessary for the Quebec nation to be recognized within a united Canada. It was as a result of our work that this happened.

In fact, the Bloc Québécois will never be in power and there is no longer any question of a referendum. What are they still doing in this House now that a referendum has been removed from the picture? Are they going to wait, 30, 40 or 100 years?

Governments are the one who make the laws. Right now, it is the members of the government who can put forward measures and change things, and not the Bloc Québécois.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary for Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the motion of the member for Joliette. The point I want to make is that the Bloc members' statements about official languages do not stand up. Inevitably, they start by claiming that French cannot flourish in Canada, which could not be further from the truth and flies in the face of our country's history.

I want to assure this House that our government is firmly committed to meeting its obligations to support the official languages and promote French and English throughout Canada.

I will begin by outlining the linguistic framework put in place by the Government of Canada in recent decades. The objective and results of this framework have always been to enhance and not to impede the vitality of our two official languages.

The first Official Languages Act, passed in 1969, laid the groundwork for protecting and enhancing linguistic duality in Canada. This act was adopted as a result of the recommendations of the Laurendeau-Dunton commission on bilingualism and biculturalism.

In 1982, we saw the adoption of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which was part of the constitutional amendments that came out of the repatriation of the Canadian constitution. This charter clearly states that English and French are the official

languages of Canada and have equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all institutions of the Parliament and Government of Canada.

A new Official Languages Act came into effect in 1988 to reflect and implement the provisions of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This new act included provisions about promoting English and French, and these provisions were strengthened by an amendment in 2005.

I would like to remind the House that it was a unanimous resolution of our caucus that paved the way for the adoption of this amendment, whose main objective is to enhance the vitality of English and French linguistic minority communities in Canada and support their development.

This description of the measures that have been put in place in recent decades to recognize French shows that there is a consensus in Canada on official languages: Canada's linguistic duality is an essential part of the Canadian identity and an extraordinary asset for all of society.

Our government is fully in favour of this linguistic framework, which it intends to strengthen in the near future, as announced in the most recent throne speech.

I would stress that the provisions relating to linguistic duality are not inconsistent with the Charter of the French Language, as the Bloc members suggest. The Charter of the French Language in fact has full effect in areas under Quebec's jurisdiction, and things work well that way.

I would like to mention in passing that the Official Languages Act essentially applies to institutions of the Government of Canada, plus a few others such as Air Canada. One of the objectives of the act is to ensure that services are provided to the public in the language of their choice. This is true in most cases.

Members of the public who speak the minority language can therefore receive services in either official language. As the most recent census figures show, 98% of the Canadian population speaks English or French, so we are able to reach virtually everyone by using one of those two languages.

The policies of the Government of Canada regarding the implementation of the Official Languages Act assign an important role to linguistic duality. I can also say without hesitation that there are many policies and programs that deal directly with the French language itself.

One concrete example is support for minority language education throughout Canada. Some provinces have established immersion programs in recent years.

•(1050)

It is too early to evaluate the final results of those measures, but requests for second language instruction continue to grow.

Teaching French as the minority language is a component for which the Government of Canada provides direct support to provincial and territorial governments. There are funding agreements in place for this.

*Business of Supply*

On the question of knowledge of French, I would point out that based on recent census figures, anglophones in Quebec are increasingly bilingual. Their rate of bilingualism has reached 70%, while among young people it has risen above 80%. We can therefore say that programs to support official languages work directly to promote learning French from one end of the country to the other.

In the area of immigration, as we all know, Quebec is permitted to select its own candidates, and the Government of Canada fully recognizes provincial jurisdiction and Quebec's francization objectives. You know that for several decades there have been agreements in place in this regard, and considerable amounts of money have been paid to the Government of Quebec to facilitate the integration of these immigrants.

From the last census, once again, we can see that for the first time in Quebec, most allophones who switched languages opted for French rather than English. This trend seems to be taking hold since three-quarters of the new immigrants who arrived between 2001 and 2006, and who speak English or French at home, chose French as their main language. In short, the immigrants who arrived in Quebec after 1971 have overwhelmingly chosen French.

As the right hon. Stephen Harper said—

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

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** As the right hon. Prime Minister said last year, French is the first language of Canada, and the developments that I am bringing to your attention show that its importance remains. We will celebrate the fact that French came first, chronologically speaking, in the coming year during the 400th anniversary of Quebec City.

French is also an international language spoken on all continents. It also ranks, I might add, among the ten major languages spoken in the world. After English, French has an official status in the greatest number of countries. As you know, the Government of Canada actively supports the institutions of the international Francophonie.

Given the Government of Canada's support for the French language, as I have just explained, I really wonder why we would have to amend the federal legislation to allow a so-called better protection of French in Quebec. The Government of Canada already acknowledges Quebec's francophone reality in all of its initiatives, and a number of indicators suggest that this approach is working. In Quebec, and in the rest of Canada, the promotion of French remains a priority to which we are committed.

•(1055)

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am a bit surprised by the speech made by my colleague opposite, especially the last part. Why should we modify the law to allow francophones to work in French in Quebec? That is what my colleague is wondering.

There is one thing I would like to tell the member: we are a French-speaking nation in America, and Quebecers have the right to use their mother tongue at work. They have the right to receive directions from their employers in their mother tongue. The member should understand this. We have a charter called the Charter of the French Language, commonly referred to as Bill 101. Quebecers

want to be able to work in French in small businesses, in Crown corporations under federal jurisdiction located in Quebec, in banks and in a sector that is certainly not insignificant: the telecommunications sector.

Does my colleague mean to say that he will not admit that it is possible for Quebecers to work in French, especially in enterprises under federal jurisdiction? Is that what the member opposite is saying?

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Mr. Speaker, as I explained, we have a responsibility, as federal government, for both official languages, English and French. We need to promote both languages in every official language minority community.

I also explained that the overall bilingualism rate in Quebec is 70%—over 80% for young people. When I mentioned immigration, I showed that immigrants who choose to live in Quebec tend to adopt French instead of English as the language they speak at work and at home.

**Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague has been focusing only on language. In the motion, we used the language issue as an example.

The Minister of Labour said earlier that the Conservative Party had recognized the Quebec nation. However, it was not the Conservative Party that recognized it. It was the House of Commons. More than 260 members voted in favour of that motion. It was the House of Commons that recognized the Quebec nation.

My question for my colleague is very simple. What is the meaning of “Quebec nation” for him? What does “nation” mean? What does this word actually mean? It is only a symbol? Does a nation have powers and prerogatives? Is the existence of that nation based on certain elements? I do not want the member to focus his answer on the language once again. Everybody recognizes that French is the official language in Quebec. This does not prevent people from being bilingual or trilingual. It does not stop us from having international relations.

My question is very simple and I would appreciate an answer. What does the member actually understand by “recognition of the Quebec nation”? What does the word “nation” mean for him?

•(1100)

[English]

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Mr. Speaker, actually, I would like to correct my colleague. It is not that Quebec is a nation; the motion was that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada. He does not even remember the motion that the House passed.

That motion was quite embarrassing to my Bloc colleagues. I remember that they had put forward a motion, and they amended their own motion, and then they ended up voting for our motion, the government motion. What an embarrassment for the Bloc.

The problem the Bloc has is that the Bloc members serve no relevance in this House. They do not represent the interests of Quebec. They are basically passing the time putting in place arguments that carry no weight whatsoever. They are a waste of time.

*Business of Supply*

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Hull—Aylmer.

My first reaction to this motion from the Bloc Québécois is mostly one of perplexity. What does the Bloc Québécois want if not to take advantage of themes related to identity-based nationalism, as shown by the text of its motion? All this to try to justify its existence. Let me emphasize that such an exercise looks quite painful these days for that party.

My perplexity comes first from the terms of this motion, which show quite clearly that, contrary to what the Bloc Québécois has been saying for a long time, the civic nationalism it claims to promote, which has nothing to do with ethnicity, is not the kind of nationalism the Bloc Québécois is advocating.

In spite of what the Bloc has been saying about its civic nationalism, the motion itself associates the Quebec nation with the language of the majority ethnic community in Quebec. With what is clearly written in the motion, the Bloc is trying to justify its existence mostly by recycling its already threadbare arguments and by taking advantage of the insecurity felt by some in Quebec about identity and culture.

The basic issue, in my view, as a French-speaking Quebecker, is one of self-confidence. What this motion shows is that the Bloc does not have confidence in what Quebeckers really are, as if Quebec were not mature enough as a society to take control of its language and its culture without feeling threatened by others.

The Bloc often urges Quebeckers to "take control of their destiny and their identity". Obviously, the independence movement and the nationalists thrive essentially on the insecurity felt by many because Quebec is the only society in America where francophones are in the majority.

Beyond their rhetoric about "the Nation", separatist leaders say very little about the teaching of the French language in the education system of Quebec, which has become a true fiasco in the last decades.

Too often, after going through elementary and secondary school, then CEGEP, students cannot write correctly in French when they start university.

If the Bloc were as concerned as it claims to be about the future and the vitality of the French fact in Quebec, it would not present a motion such as the one that we are debating today, because it is just a tactic to justify its presence in this Parliament, not to mention the fact that the measure proposed by the Bloc is really a diversion from the real challenge posed by French in Quebec, and also in the other Canadian provinces.

In order to be thriving in the future, the French language must first and foremost be fully embraced by those who speak it. This begins with a public education system that allows Quebeckers to properly master their language, through quality education.

What should motivate Bloc members is the need, in Quebec, to urgently take the measures that are required to ensure that the education system can really provide a better teaching of French and

thus help ensure that this language will continue to be spoken in Quebec for generations to come.

Two years ago, three teachers from Quebec, namely Luc Germain, Luc Papineau and Benoît Séguin, sounded the alarm in their book entitled *Le grand mensonge de l'éducation* and condemned the fact that, once in university, too few young people master French properly. I am going to briefly quote these authors.

Currently, right now—ask these three authors—do high school and college graduates write well? Do they master their language? The answer is no. Despite the reassuring and patriotic rhetoric, we are hurting and we are teaching in a way that can sometimes be qualified as mediocre what makes us unique and distinct, namely our language.

What the authors of that book are doing is to make francophone Quebeckers face their own responsibility to preserve the destiny of their language. That responsibility is first an individual one, because it is up to everyone to make the required effort. However, it is also a collective responsibility and, in that regard, Quebec has full control over its public education system and, therefore, it has all the means to assume that responsibility.

Indeed, when it comes to this issue, it is impossible to blame anyone else, because education, whether at the elementary, secondary or college level, is definitely and strictly a Quebec jurisdiction. Therefore, it is the responsibility of each and every francophone Quebecker to ensure the preservation of the French language, through a better and more effective teaching, and to demand that the Quebec government increase its efforts to achieve this critical goal for the future of the French language in our part of the continent.

So instead of resorting to empty rhetoric with endless mentions of "the nation", and instead of using diversionary tactics for essentially partisan purposes, which result in no one taking responsibility for anything, the Bloc should be more concerned with the quality of French language teaching in Quebec.

That is something concrete that can be done to achieve the goal of preserving the French language and culture in Quebec. Fueling identity insecurities is not only a form of demagoguery that does nothing good for democracy, but it is also very counterproductive, since it takes us away from our individual and collective responsibilities.

● (1105)

In conclusion, I remind members that most Quebeckers are not at all worried about the survival of their linguistic or cultural identity as francophones. Unlike the people who continue to alarm Quebeckers about the alleged threat posed by English-speaking Quebeckers when it comes to immigrants, francophone Quebeckers have unwavering confidence in their ability to take responsibility for their language and culture and to envision their future.

*Business of Supply*

I think it is important to remember that this is true for most Quebecers. They will not be fooled by the Bloc's diversionary tactic—this motion—because they have enough self-confidence and are thinking clearly enough not to fall for it. Quebecers want concrete, positive measures from the Government of Quebec that will ensure the vitality and future of the French fact. Quebecers know that political games will not help them achieve that goal, which is too important to be tainted by strictly partisan political interests. For these reasons, the Liberal Party will oppose this motion.

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague. Let us try to put this in context. I hope he will listen to what I am going to tell him, in French or English. We are not talking about language here. Careful now, that is not what we are talking about; we are talking about the Quebec nation. Members recognized the Quebec nation in a united Canada. What does that mean in French? What does it mean today? Today, we are introducing a motion to say what we are asking for: that in Quebec, the language of work in agencies and businesses be French. It is not very complicated.

There is something I do not understand. I would like my colleague to give me an answer to this. This is not just a question of language. The motion is not just about language; it is also about values, Quebec's values. It is what the Liberals in this House adopted when they agreed to the motion recognizing Quebec as a nation. What do they want to do? They may well say they are going to vote against this motion, but that will not mean that the problem will be solved tomorrow.

My question to my colleague is the following: what does recognition of the Quebec nation mean to him?

**Mr. Bernard Patry:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my Bloc Québécois colleague for his question.

This is a question of language and pride. I too voted in favour of the motion by the government. As the member said, that motion was passed by the Parliament of Canada and not just by the Bloc Québécois.

As a francophone, I have no problems. Earlier, one of his colleagues said that when he goes to Dorval Airport, he gets served in English only. I go to Dorval Airport often, because I travel throughout the country, and as often as possible I get served in French. I demand it. Like any good francophone, I speak to airport personnel in French. Before someone says "good day" to me, I say "bonjour". Once I speak in French, they reply to me in French as often as possible.

To me, the French fact in Quebec, how Quebec will be able to take charge, is through education. The best way to achieve things through education is to have a school system that is very important and that will enable all Quebecers to take charge in French.

Last weekend, the Iranians had their Norouz celebration. Nothing could be more interesting for me, representing an English-speaking riding in Quebec, than to hear young Iranians speaking in impeccable French, French that was sometimes even better than what is spoken by our francophones. I think this is actually a pointless debate. We are a bilingual country now and it has to stay that way.

• (1110)

[English]

**Hon. Jim Abbott (Parliamentary Secretary for Canadian Heritage, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would think that my Liberal friend, with whom I agree completely on this issue, would want to be correcting our friend from the Bloc Québécois who referred to the motion that was passed in this House as referring to a Quebec nation. That was not the motion at all. It was the Quebecois as a nation within a united Canada.

If we were to make that clarity, for not only that member, not that he will accept it, but for the Bloc Québécois and for the viewers and readers of *Hansard*, it would be very helpful to understand that in fact the Bloc Québécois is distorting the motion that was actually passed in the House.

**Mr. Bernard Patry:** Mr. Speaker, I fully agree with my Conservative colleague's statement that this Quebec nation is within a united Canada. We on this side fully agree with that. With Quebec being a real francophone province, it does not mean that we need to interfere with the rights of all other Canadians living in Quebec or the anglophone community.

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take the floor after my colleague's obsequious remarks in which he blames everything on the public education system. That is precisely where the problem lies. If Canada had recognized years ago the existence of the Quebec nation, maybe the transfers to the provinces for education would not have been cut like they were under his government then led by Jean Chrétien. His own government cut the education transfers to the provinces, Quebec included, with the result that our elementary schools, high schools and colleges are critically underfunded.

The motion before us does not deal with language only. It also deals with the recognition of the Quebec nation and the elimination of the fiscal imbalance. We have no lessons to take from a member whose political party cut the transfers to the provinces and did not acknowledge the existence of the fiscal imbalance. As far as the obsequious remarks of the hon. member are concerned, I cannot wait to hear more.

**Mr. Bernard Patry:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague calls my remarks "obsequious", but they are nevertheless based on facts. It is true the federal government reduced transfer payments to all the Canadian provinces. We agreed to that, and for good reasons.

But my colleague makes a mistake: The quality of French teaching in Quebec will not be improved just with more fees and more money, but with a better education system, better teachers, people who really know French and can teach it. This is completely different from what my colleague in the Bloc is talking about.

**Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, before us today we have the following motion from the Bloc Québécois, which reads as follows:

*Business of Supply*

That, in the opinion of the House, following the recognition of the Quebec nation by this House, the government should move from words to deeds and propose measures to solidify that recognition, including compliance with the language of labour relations of Quebec's Charter of the French language regarding enterprises under federal jurisdiction located in Quebec.

This motion seeks to perpetuate old fears that the French language is under constant threat and that previous efforts of Canadian governments to promote French both inside and outside Quebec have been to no avail.

The Bloc Québécois has always defended Quebec's jurisdictions. But this motion would impose provincial law on enterprises under federal jurisdiction. It holds falsely that the French language in Quebec is in a disastrous decline. In fact, the 2006 census, and the report of the Office québécois de la langue française published on March 5, 2008, paint a different picture. Specifically, the use of French in the workplace has increased if we compare it with census statistics from 2001.

It is also important to realize that the changes proposed by the Bloc could in fact threaten the rights of the anglophone minority in Quebec.

The Bloc would like to ghettoize French and isolate Quebec linguistically by disregarding the situation in the other provinces. A bilingual Canada benefits every province and every linguistic minority. In many provinces and in the territories, bilingualism rates are going up, showing the vitality of minority linguistic communities. Furthermore, a recent survey that can be found in the Lord report shows that a large majority of Canadians believe that bilingualism is a factor that defines our country.

As was just mentioned, Parliament passed the motion recognizing Quebec as a nation on November 27, 2006. Since that historic vote, the Bloc has been trying to force the government into implementing policies that would bring the nation of Quebec closer to the Bloc's dream. This motion is just the Bloc's latest attempt along those lines. By forcing enterprises under federal jurisdiction to conform to Quebec's Charter of the French Language, the motion in fact gives Quebec provincial laws precedence over federal laws, and, from the Bloc's point of view, gives additional recognition to Quebec's status as a nation.

The Bloc Québécois has also introduced legislation along the same lines, Bill C-482. The Bloc bill would amend the Canada Labour Code so that federally regulated companies doing business in Quebec would be subject to Quebec's Charter of the French language. The Bloc Québécois is trying to impose the Charter of the French Language, Bill 101, on federally regulated companies by filling what it calls a "regulatory gap". In fact, section 24 of part V of the Official Languages Act stipulates that:

English and French are the languages of work in all federal institutions, and officers and employees of all federal institutions have the right to use either official language in accordance with this Part.

The Bloc contends that this act does not refer to companies under federal jurisdiction, but to "federal institutions", which would allow the Bloc to impose the provisions of the charter on companies under federal jurisdiction.

The bill reveals the hypocrisy of the Bloc Québécois on this issue, because it impinges on existing federal laws. Moreover, the Bloc

Québécois has not explained the economic and structural consequences its bill would have on federally regulated companies or on Quebec, which enforces the language law.

The Bloc has also not explained how the anglophone minority would be protected. Even Canada's Commissioner of Official Languages, Graham Fraser, has said that Bill C-482 could threaten anglophone minority rights, especially when it comes to service delivery.

The Bloc's motion strikes at the very heart of bilingualism, which is a Canadian value.

• (1115)

What this motion is saying is that French must be promoted in Quebec without regard for the linguistic minorities outside the province. It is important to note that, according to Statistics Canada, the proportion of Canadians whose mother tongue is French increased by 1.6% between 2001 and 2006. In addition, during the same period, the proportion of anglophones who know French rose from 9% to 9.4%. The proportion of allophones who know French rose from 11.8% to 12.1% during the same period.

In Quebec in 2006, nearly seven out of 10 anglophones, 68.9%, said they knew French and English, compared to 66.1% in 2001. It is also important to note that the bilingualism rate increased in eight of the twelve provinces and territories, but not in Quebec, from 1996 to 2006.

To support the position that bilingualism is at the core of Canadian values, I want to mention that bilingualism has also become more popular since 2003. Indeed, it has increased from 56% in 2003, to 72% in 2006, among Canadians. One of the main arguments of the Bloc Québécois is that French as the language of work is being threatened, and that applying the charter to a larger number of businesses would improve the situation. However, the 2006 census conducted by Statistics Canada shows just the opposite. In 2001, 63% of immigrants spoke French in their workplace, compared to 65% in 2006. As well, 60% of allophone immigrants were using French in 2001, compared to 63% in 2006.

Moreover, in the retail sector, which is a provincial jurisdiction, the use of English in the workplace has increased by 1%, which seems to indicate that even provincial laws on language do not yield the anticipated results.

The action plan for official languages developed by the leader of the official opposition and the Liberal government in 2003, with a budget of \$810 million, is at the core of the Liberal initiative to promote official languages. This plan seeks to help linguistic minorities across the country, including the anglophone minority in Quebec.

In a speech delivered in June 2007 at the summit of francophone and Acadian communities, our leader pledged to continue to implement the Liberal plan, to pursue the efforts made, and to restore the court challenges program, which is so important for minorities, while also doubling its budget.

*Business of Supply*

The Bloc Québécois is trying to find a way to catch the Conservative government off guard, regarding its recognition of the Quebec nation. The Bloc was literally caught with its pants down by the Conservative government when, in an attempt to embarrass the new government by challenging it to prove that it was sincere about open federalism, it presented yet again a motion to recognize the Quebec nation. When the minority Conservative government used the Bloc's initiative and managed to get the House to pass a motion recognizing the Quebec nation within a united Canada, the Bloc was caught off guard, and questions about its relevancy began to be voiced again.

In conclusion, this motion is an intrusion into federal jurisdictions. The Bloc Québécois keeps condemning federal intrusions into provincial jurisdictions, looking shocked every time. It is presenting this motion for just one purpose, which is to try to show that it has a reason to exist.

• (1120)

**Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I heard my fellow member say that the Bloc Québécois is trying to intrude on federal legislation. When it comes to minimum wage, which involves the Canada Labour Code for federally regulated workers, how can the federal government agree to adjust the federal minimum wage to match the provincial minimum wage? How can the federal government agree to adjust the minimum wage in Quebec so that it is the same? How can it be the same in New Brunswick, in Ontario and yet this is acceptable to the federal government? This is not a matter of intruding on federal jurisdiction. It is simply asking for accommodation, as was the case for minimum wage, which would give telecommunications, transportation, bank workers, and so on the right to work in French. Currently, these institutions have no obligation to make people work in French.

Earlier, my colleague from Abitibi gave examples. I can also give a very concrete one. At the Dorval airport, the person at security could not even speak to me properly in French. Worse still, she could not speak to me properly in English. I did not understand a single word of what she said to me in English. All she was asking was if she could touch my sweater, and I did not understand what she was saying because she spoke English poorly and her French was worse.

I think that there is a problem in institutions under federal jurisdiction, and we should give people the right to speak French. Speaking in your mother tongue when serving someone who speaks the same language as you is a fundamental right.

**Mr. Marcel Proulx:** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague has asked two questions and I will answer one after the other.

The first one is related to the minimum wage. My colleague should not be wondering about that. He should understand that those are agreements between the federal government and the provinces and territories. Nothing is imposed on the federal government. Nothing is forced on any provinces or territories. Those agreements are reached by mutual consent by the Government of Canada and the provincial and territorial governments.

Then there was his misadventure at the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Airport, in Dorval. As I understand my colleague's explanation, it did not involve an employee, described as a federal government

employee by the member, who refused to speak French and insisted on speaking English. It involved an employee, according to my colleague, who could speak neither French nor English.

Of course, I cannot approve of this situation. I sympathize with my colleague from the Bloc. However, this is not a problem that relates to the official languages of Canada. It is a very basic problem of recognition of one of the two official languages of our country. My colleague should make a complaint. I would be happy to join with him in doing so. Nevertheless, this has nothing to do with the language of work, which should be French rather than any other language in Quebec.

• (1125)

[English]

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I did enjoy my colleague's comments. It is clear that the Liberal Party members understand the negative effects this motion would have, as we do, and they clearly understand what it means to be truly a federal party, as we do on this side.

I think they would acknowledge the fact that the Bloc Québécois is far from being a party that has accomplished anything of value for Canada or in fact Quebec.

I would like the member to acknowledge that he misspoke in referring to the motion of November 2006. It did not talk about Quebec as a nation within a united Canada, it talked about the Québécois as a nation within a united Canada, not Quebec. I would like him to clarify that.

Also, could he explain to the House again, especially for the Bloc Québécois, the negative effects this action would have on Canada and everything we stand for?

**Mr. Marcel Proulx:** Mr. Speaker, to my hon. colleague across the aisle, this might have been an interpretation difference or translation difference, but we all know that it was la nation Québécoise. It is not a question of, as he would understand, the geographical territory. That was not the intent. That is not the situation. It is la nation Québécoise.

As far as the negative effects, I could repeat my 10 minute speech although I only have about 30 seconds left. However, let us face it, the Bloc Québécois has entered into a very difficult period of time. The Parti québécois in the province of Quebec has decided that it would not be a good idea to return to the idea of a referendum. It would not be a good idea to press for a referendum at this time and it would not necessarily be a good idea either to press in regard to the sovereignty or separation of the province.

Therefore, Bloc members are in a blind situation. Where do they go from here? The reason for their coming to Ottawa was the passion, but I understand now from comments I am getting that it is much more a question of pensions.

*Business of Supply*

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to speak to the opposition motion from the Bloc Québécois relating to the Charter of the French Language. Even though it has been read often since 10 o'clock this morning, this motion put forward by the hon. member for Joliette is very important and deserves to be read once more:

That, in the opinion of the House, following the recognition of the Quebec nation by this House, the government should move from words to deeds and propose measures to solidify that recognition, including compliance with the language of labour relations of Quebec's Charter of the French language regarding enterprises under federal jurisdiction located in Quebec.

I believe it is clear that this motion refers to enterprises and not to services provided by the federal government. There is a big difference.

Let us talk about the language of work. As we know, Bill 101, through the Charter of the French Language, gives francophone Quebecers the opportunity to work in their mother tongue.

I should mention that I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Outremont.

This motion is similar to Bill C-482. The NDP made its position clear regarding Bill C-482. It has supported the bill from the beginning. The role of Parliament is to move bills forward. However, we cannot do so blindly. To the extent possible, we must be able to study a bill. If we want to change Canadian legislation, we must first study it. Parliament includes not only the House of Commons but also as the parliamentary committees, which are made up of members from all parties. These committees have an opportunity to invite Canadians to participate in the study of bills, in order to determine whether the bills are sensible. This also gives us the opportunity to study each bill.

A motion in the House of Commons does not mean that it is binding. It suggests to the government that it should move in that direction. What does the Bloc Québécois want? It is calling on the Conservative government to move forward in a way that is respectful of the Charter of the French Language, commonly known as Bill 101 in Quebec, which governs the language of work, which is French.

I can understand what is happening in Quebec. It is a question of leaving the Bloc Québécois alone to look after its own political affairs. I respect that. However, when it comes to the significance of the motion itself, we must put politics aside and focus on that significance. I prefer to make my own interpretation of the motion, rather than dwelling on the squabbles that have existed for the past 40 years, since the days of Trudeau, Chrétien and company, and everyone who has always argued with Quebec. Instead of that, I simply want to focus on determining the importance of the motion.

Based on this motion, it seems to me that Quebec workers themselves do not understand why, when their company is under provincial jurisdiction, they can speak their language, French, but when their company is under federal jurisdiction, they cannot use the law to speak the language of their choice. For example, employees of Radio-Nord in Quebec do not understand why they cannot express themselves exclusively in French—they simply cannot—although, if they were employed by a company under provincial jurisdiction, governed by Bill 101, they would be allowed to do so.

For our part, in the NDP, we checked with the labour movement in Quebec. They share our opinion. The labour movement supports an examination of Bill C-482 by the House of Commons. While the Conservatives try to say they are a federalist party and that they should lead the country; the provinces do exist and we should respect them. Certainly, we must respect the will of the provinces and discuss what is happening there.

• (1130)

I would never have believed it was possible in the history of Canada but last week, in New Brunswick, 350 anglophones assembled in the street in front of the Legislative Assembly in Fredericton to demand that their children be allowed to learn French starting in grade 1. That began a new chapter in the history of our country. We must be open to that. It is a page of our history.

People now understand that we can speak both official languages in this country. I do not think the Bloc Québécois motion means that they do not want English in Quebec any more. That is a false debate; that is the argument of Justin Trudeau and that whole group. What is happening now is about federalist quarrels. That is what divided our country. Now, we recognize what is going on in our country.

I was saddened to see the reaction of the premier of New Brunswick, Shawn Graham—I am criticizing him for it this morning, here in the House of Commons—towards the English-speaking people who want their children to learn French, the second official language. He put obstacles in their way by refusing that. He said they would learn it in grade 5, at the age of 11. Who is he to dictate to people what is good for their children? Who is he to do that?

It is very sad that, despite the direction that Canada's two founding communities are taking, with our first nations partners, and are finally now able to work together—the new generations are all working together—there are still government representatives who want to throw obstacles in the way.

The goal of this motion, which we want to support—the NDP will, in fact, support it—is that the Québécois people, the heart of North America's francophones, should be able to work in French if a company under federal jurisdiction opens for business in Quebec. People do not want the big boss to compel them to speak English if they want a job. That has happened too often.

We have to be open to that. In adopting the Sherbrooke Declaration, the NDP showed that it was going to start studying what else it could do after recognizing Quebec as a nation. We cannot just recognize Quebec as a nation without anything at all changing in the life of Quebecers. Otherwise, we would just be the same kind of stubborn mules as Trudeau and Chrétien. This attitude really has to change. We have to stop trying to make Canadians think that if we do this, it is the end of federalism, the end of Canada.

The fact that the member for Acadie—Bathurst learned English did not make him lose his French. People who lose their mother tongue only do so because they want to. There is so much we can do today, reading and all the other things we can do, that we would never lose our mother tongue if we loved it. That is one of the things that cannot be lost. No one can persuade me of that.

*Business of Supply*

What is dangerous, though, is when nothing is done to give people an opportunity to learn the language of their ancestors. That is what happened out west, where francophones had to fight to get their own schools because they could not send their children to francophone schools and their children were becoming anglophones. That is what happened.

I do not think, though, that there are anglophones in Quebec who lose their mother tongue. Quite to the contrary, they keep their mother tongue and learn French as well. That is great and they are to be congratulated, but the same thing has to happen elsewhere. It was the same story in Prince Edward Island.

That is why it is too bad that the federal government eliminated the court challenges program to prevent French-speaking Canadian minorities from getting what they need to preserve their mother tongue. This is the kind of thing people mean when they say federalism does not work. The government prevents communities all over the country from preserving their language. It actually does things to ensure that they lose it.

We should be more open-minded, therefore, and we are going to support the Bloc motion for all these reasons. It is not because they are separatists or this or that but because it makes sense to support it. We can then take a good look at Bill C-482, study it, decide whether some amendments are necessary and propose them so that everyone can be in favour of this bill.

• (1135)

[English]

**Mr. Ken Epp (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, while the member was speaking in French, and I believe eloquently, I thought about our interpreters in this place who make it possible for all of us, regardless of our mother tongue, to participate in Canada's Parliament. Those interpreters listened to what the member was saying and, simultaneously and at the same speed at which the member was speaking, translated it into English so that I could understand what he said. I have great admiration and some envy for people who are fluent in both languages.

I would also like to comment for those in our country who are currently bilingual or unilingual in either language that if they want to maintain their mother tongue, they have to take some measures to do so. I do not know if the Speaker is aware of this, but my first language is neither English nor French. My parents insisted that we learn the German language so we could communicate with our grandparents, who never did learn either English or French even though they came to this country.

What I will tell members here is that when my grandparents passed away we stopped using the language and, because of that, my children and grandchildren now are unilingual English. We lost our mother tongue because there was no extraordinary effort taken to maintain it.

Therefore, I would like to commend all members of the House, including members in our party, even though the Bloc members do not want to recognize or acknowledge it, who take those extraordinary steps to maintain their language. Let us do what we can. At the same time, let us recognize that this government is

probably doing more than any government before it in order to extend and maintain the true bilingual nature of this country.

With that, I end my comments. I do not have a question. I just wanted to say that I enjoyed the member's speech, because he is quite obviously fluent in both languages and I express my envy for that.

• (1140)

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments. I want to thank the interpreters for the good work they do. I will bet that it is not easy to follow me in any interpretation. I would like to thank the interpreters and I know they will earn their wages today when I take the floor.

However, at the same time, in terms of the idea in the motion before us, we have to think about workers on a job who have no interpreters to enable them to speak to their boss. That is what we have to think about. We have to think about the little people in the community who go to work. Those are the people we have to think about. We must not let politics take this over. Quebec is a great province, which we recognize as a nation, and I want to say that we recognize the Acadians as a nation too. We recognize the first nations as a nation. We recognize all Canadians as a nation. That is the way we should work, together as friends helping each other.

I am not worried about the anglophones in Montreal keeping their English. I say that very strongly. Let us look at the institutions there. McGill is one of the best universities in the whole country. Those students have a chance to study there. They have good schools and all of that. I am saying that I do not think we have to worry about that, but we do have to worry about other places that do not have such institutions.

That is why I do not agree with the hon. member from the Conservative Party when he says the Conservative government has been doing this, this, and that. The Conservatives are the ones who cut the court challenges program and that has stopped the communities from getting those tools in order to stay alive. As a matter of fact, now if a community loses its court challenge program case, the community will have to pay the court costs. That is why I have to blame the government. It is not doing the right thing for the survival of these communities, whether it is in Quebec or across the country.

For example, there is the attitude the government has taken on official languages. I do not agree that the Conservatives should have Bernard Lord and go in camera to have studies across the country when the parliamentary committee has done a good job. We have not yet heard what the actual plan for official languages will be. I cannot wait to see it. It is with the action plan that we will help Canadians across the country in terms of health care, education, culture and art. That is where we will be able to help people. That is why I say that we have to do it together. We probably should put a little bit of the politics aside and do the right thing for Canadians all across the country.

*Business of Supply*

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, like my colleague from Acadie—Bathurst, I am here to say that the New Democratic Party of Canada will vote in favour of the motion proposed today. I want to take this opportunity to try to inform my Conservative colleague. He said earlier that his government has done more than any other government to ensure that the true nature of bilingualism is respected and reflected in Canada. I want to tell him that he should take a close look at what my colleague for Acadie—Bathurst just talked about, the court challenges program.

Had it not been for this program established under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, we would have never had cases such as the case brought forward by what was called at the time the ACFO, the French Canadian association of Ontario. That case allowed the Supreme Court to determine the extent of certain obligations. People supposedly had the right to instruction in linguistic minority schools, which meant the ability to exercise some control. But it was not that clear in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. These rights needed to be brought to life, otherwise these nice theories would have had no effect in the real world.

The same thing happened in Manitoba, your native province, Mr. Speaker. Let us not forget that, in 1890, Manitoba passed a law to deny francophones the right to have laws written in their language. The Supreme Court reinstated that right in June 1985. I know all about that since I was in charge of reviewing the French language version of the laws of Manitoba. For two years and a half, I had the great pleasure to work regularly in Winnipeg and I became well-acquainted with the Franco-Manitoban community. I still have many friends in this vibrant community.

Today, in the official languages committee, we heard witnesses from the Northwest Territories and from Saskatchewan. In that regard, I would like to quote the translation of a popular sentence since translations found here are sometimes better than original versions.

[*English*]

In English we sometimes say that one has to be able to walk the talk. The French version that has been dreamed up here in Canada is even better than the original English one.

• (1145)

[*Translation*]

The French expression is “Il faut que les bottines suivent les babines.” The Conservatives just pay lip service. They are prepared to say that they recognize the Quebec nation, but the first measure they proposed sought to proportionally reduce Quebec representation here and to eliminate access of francophones outside Quebec to the court challenges program, which enables them to establish and recognize their rights.

When the Prime Minister received the first annual report from Graham Fraser, the current Commissioner of Official Languages, he was shocked. His defence was simplistic. We know that our Prime Minister is rather grouchy, but it was surprising to see him launch an all-out attack. He defended himself by saying that he began his press conferences in French. That is fine and symbolically important but that will not build a school in Saskatchewan or allow a person from

Manitoba to work in his own language and to prosper, to use his language and make it a living language. Their gestures continue to be symbolic; they recognize the nation but do not take action to make it a reality.

It is an entirely different story on the Liberal side. My colleague mentioned Justin Trudeau. This is astounding. He recently said that those who are not bilingual are lazy. It is outrageous to say to people who live anywhere in Quebec that if they have never learned English it is because they are lazy. What Mr. Trudeau should realize is that he is privileged, as I am. My mother was francophone and my father was anglophone and so I learned both languages. I was fortunate and so was he. He does not acknowledge that it is a question of luck or that he is privileged, since he finds it unusual that others are not like him. That is indicative of his attitude.

Yesterday, we learned that the Liberals have appointed Gerard Kennedy. To find out a little more about him, I suggest you read a very good article by Joey Slinger in today's *Toronto Star*. Gerard Kennedy was one of the Liberal leadership hopefuls. Yesterday, the current leader appointed him the critic for intergovernmental affairs.

What message did that send? Easy: the party does not recognize the Quebec nation. That was the message he sent. Today, the Liberals will show us what they think of the French language in Quebec. People are paying very close attention to this, and they are worried. Many years ago, from 1980 to 1983, I had the opportunity to work for the Conseil de la langue française, and I also worked for Alliance Québec. As I said earlier, I was responsible for legislation in Manitoba, and as commissioner for Quebec's language of instruction appeals commission, I drafted the agreement following the Supreme Court ruling that allowed Quebec to maintain its French character and permitted unilingual French billboards. That means I understand both sides and know how to work toward solutions.

What the Liberals demonstrated earlier was astonishing. The Liberals believe that it would be sacrilegious to recognize Quebec or the importance of allowing the French language to reach its full potential within the only Canadian province that has a francophone majority. That goes against everything they have been saying for the last 40 years. Why? Because the Liberal Party of Canada is known for its tendency to say that it can be trusted to keep Quebecers in their place. It should come as no surprise that of the 75 seats in Quebec, the Liberals can count theirs on two hands.

Just before Easter, the Conservative government, acting on a whim, got involved in the securities issue, which was none of its business, and tried to bring in some nonsense about federal control that would tie the hands of the provinces, including Quebec. That issue is an important one for Quebec, and Quebec's National Assembly unanimously passed a motion about it.

I noticed with great interest that the French-speaking Liberal members from Quebec were not here for that vote. I am anxious to see what the member for Bourassa, former Liberal critic for national defence and now critic for official languages, will do this afternoon.

*Business of Supply*

Today's vote on the motion only says that there is a bill proposal on the table and that we already voted to have it considered. We want some statistics, we want to hear experts and know what the situation is. We cannot simply say today that we do not even want to talk about it.

• (1150)

However, that is exactly the message the Liberal Party of Canada is sending. But that suits it well. Indeed, that party does not want to discuss it. That party is showing its true colours.

[English]

In order for people to understand, this is about Bill C-482, which seeks to ensure workers' rights. Once a job becomes an interprovincial undertaking and subject to federal law, the boss can ask the employee to have a knowledge of a language other than French in Quebec. We should look at that, bring in experts and find out the real effect it would have on the critical mass and strength of the French language in Quebec. It is a subject of concern for all Canadians and it certainly is a concern for us in the NDP.

It would be a contradiction to say we want to have Bill C-482 studied in committee and have those experts in and find out the real lay of the land and then turn around and vote against this motion. Today we in the NDP are sending a clear signal that we want that debate to take place. We want to hear those experts. We want to find out what this is about and come to a final decision with regard to the disposition of Bill C-482.

[Translation]

We will not get there with the attitude of the federal Liberals. The true signal the leader of the Liberal Party gave us was when he named Gerard Kennedy responsible for intergovernmental relations.

I personally had a debate with Gerard Kennedy. He proclaims to anyone who is willing to listen that Quebec is not a nation. That is Gerard Kennedy's position. Not long before Christmas, Justin Trudeau said that Quebec was not a nation. Not only they are both official candidates for the Liberal Party but Mr. Kennedy has just been named to a very important position even though he has not been elected yet.

There comes a time when one must go beyond symbols. There comes a time when we must abandon 40-year-old strategies that aim to divide Canadians by saying that the Liberal Party's trademark is the capacity to unite. That is untrue. We can see today that this is false. That party tries to divide us.

We believe that a strong Quebec with a well protected and dynamic French language adds a lot to Canada. That is why we are not afraid to say that we want to study Bill C-482. And we do not want to send a message to the contrary by voting against the motion. Today, we will stand up and vote for the motion by the Bloc.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the NDP is hard to follow. On the one hand, the NDP members describe themselves as advocates for the official languages, but on the other hand, in 2007, they voted against the \$30 million increase over two years for official language minority communities and linguistic duality. They also voted against budget 2008, which includes a follow-up to the

official languages action plan and follows on Bernard Lord's recommendations regarding government consultations over linguistic duality. They also said that they wanted any bill affecting the Official Languages Act submitted to a committee.

How can they explain this two-faced position?

• (1155)

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member really wants to help Quebec, he should take a hard look at his 2008 budget, which he just mentioned.

In the fall of last year, the Conservatives provided \$14 billion in tax cuts. This is part of their plan. They think it is the way to go. But a company that does not make a profit has no income tax to pay. We agree on that. In the manufacturing industry, Quebec unfortunately won the gold medal for the largest number of lost jobs, with 70,000. A manufacturing company that did not make a profit did not get any of this money. In the forest industry, a company that did not make a profit did not get any money either. Who got the money? By a curious coincidence, most of these \$14 billion went to the oil industry, right in area of the hon. member from Edmonton.

Does it bother him that I do not support him in this decision? A strong Quebec economy is good for everybody and helps keep this country united. Instead of always supporting the tar sands industry and a production that runs against sustainable development, this member could perhaps start thinking that because of an overheated oil industry, the Conservatives are gutting a Canadian economy that used to be balanced, an economy we have been building since the second world war.

Well paid jobs with pension benefits are being lost in the manufacturing industry. There is also the issue of long term sustainable development, because future generations will have to pay for the Conservatives' foolishness. They are depleting our natural resources without thinking of the impact on future generations.

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would urge my colleague to come and visit successful manufacturing plants in the riding of Lévis—Bellechasse. We believe in the manufacturing sector and in the promotion of linguistic duality across the country. This is why I have some difficulty in understanding my colleague's take today. I have a few questions for him.

New Democrats have always pushed hard for centralization. I am somewhat surprised today to see that their position on this motion is creating confusion. It seems fundamental to me, since our government has a policy of open federalism, that areas of jurisdiction be respected. I would like to know how he sees the promotion of linguistic duality and respecting jurisdictions in light of the proposal he wishes the House to pass today. Does he not see this could bring about an intrusion in the areas of provincial jurisdiction?

Finally, I would simply like to remind my colleague that over 94% of Quebecers mainly speak French often or regularly at work. Quebecers are open and the manufacturing plants in Bellechasse do business across the country. If we consider that 94% of Quebecers use French predominantly, what is the relevance of this motion when we should be seeking to increase the productivity of our businesses to ensure they are competitive and world class.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** Mr. Speaker, the future former member for Lévis—Bellechasse has some nerve. He will no longer be a member of Parliament when we have done with him on the Rabaska project. He has some nerve to lecture us on centralization.

Let us not forget that the last thing the Conservatives did, just before Easter, was to shackle us with the Minister of Finance's approach to securities. I would remind the House that Vincent Lacroix is serving a jail sentence of 12 years because Quebec has a financial market management structure. The last thing that we need is more interference from the federal government. The member for Lévis—Bellechasse has voted in favour of this centralization. The New Democratic Party has voted against it.

In terms of sustainable development, my comment relating to his good friend, the member for Edmonton—Sherwood Park, also applies to him. Once Denis L'Homme, the NDP candidate in Lévis—Bellechasse, has engaged all the region's dynamic forces against the Rabaska project, which is contrary to the public interest and to sustainable development, he will have understood that Quebecers value their environment. They do not want to pass on to future generations the responsibility for today's bad decisions.

• (1200)

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to reread the Bloc Québécois' opposition day motion.

—following the recognition of the Quebec nation by this House, the government should move from words to deeds and propose measures to solidify that recognition, including compliance with the language of labour relations of Quebec's Charter of the French language regarding enterprises under federal jurisdiction located in Quebec.

In this regard, I would like to respond to the member for Lévis—Bellechasse, who is gloating that everything is going so well and that 94% of Quebecers speak French at work. If this is the case, it should be included in the act. If this reflects the real situation, they should put it in writing, support the Bloc Québécois' motion and formalize this ideal situation that exists in Lévis—Bellechasse.

The fact remains that Quebecers are a nation. By recognizing this, the House of Commons automatically recognized its attributes, in particular its language, its culture, its model of integration and its Civil Code, but we will talk about it later. French is the official language of Quebec, except for the federal government, which recognizes two official languages. However, the federal government does not expressly recognize Quebec's culture. Whenever the federal government comes to Quebec to promote bilingualism, particularly in Montreal, it weakens French. Whenever French is supported in Quebec, it helps francophones outside Quebec.

However, the federal government imposes an integration model. It imposes multiculturalism, which runs counter to the Quebec integration model of interculturalism.

The Bloc Québécois recommends, therefore, that the federal government recognize and comply with the Charter of the French Language in Quebec, specifically with regard to enterprises under federal jurisdiction, that it exempt Quebec from its multicultural policy and that it grant Quebec regulatory power over radio broadcasting and telecommunications.

This would be a start in a genuine recognition of the Quebec nation. In fact, although the Conservative party prides itself on its openness towards Quebec, it has done absolutely nothing for the people of Quebec, except for recognizing the nation, which was, let us recall, a Bloc Québécois initiative.

It was the Bloc Québécois that, on an opposition day like today, introduced a motion that called for the recognition of Quebec as a nation. This government, that really just intended to obstruct and deceive us, used a shameful political tactic and applauded itself as it said that it was going to recognize Quebec as a nation, but within a united Canada. We will see later that Quebec was already a nation before Canada even existed.

As I have just mentioned, a little more than a year ago, on Monday, November 27, 2006, the House of Commons agreed to the following motion by 265 votes to 16:

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

This was, as it still is, a great victory for the Bloc, but it was above all a victory for all the people of Quebec. To be recognized as a nation is no small matter, and it comes with privileges and rights. But on these, the government is silent.

Even so, it was still the first time that Canada recognized our existence as a national community. It is the first country to do so and we hope that it will not be the last.

Applied to persons, the term nation refers to a “group of people, generally fairly large, distinguished by its awareness of its unity and a desire to live together” according to the definition in the Robert dictionary. In short, “nation” is the community to which we belong, the group with which we identify, and within which we debate and decide how our society is to be organized.

And because a nation is the special place where political decisions can be made, recognizing a nation means recognizing a political entity with legitimate political rights and aspirations.

• (1205)

By recognizing the Quebec nation, the House of Commons recognized the right of Quebecers to control the social, economic and cultural development of Quebec themselves. By stating that the Quebec nation is composed of all residents of Quebec, regardless of their origin or mother tongue or the region where they live, the federal government recognized that the Quebec nation has a clear geographic base, made up of all of the territory of Quebec. In so doing, Canada declared that calls for partition are illegitimate.

In short, recognition of the Quebec nation also means recognition of the legitimacy of Quebec's repeated demands that Quebecers have the powers and resources that are needed in order to develop their own society. To date, unfortunately, Canada has not yet acted on that recognition, and continues to behave as if it was composed of a single nation. Here again, we can see this Conservative government's lack of openness to Quebec and to Quebecers. As we shall soon see, this government's openness to Quebecers is a myth; it is an urban legend. Recognition of a nation must in fact be more than symbolic.

*Business of Supply*

Nations have rights, and they have one right in particular, the right to self-determination, the right to decide the course of their own development. Quebec can choose the course of its own development by becoming sovereign. We know that this is the first choice of the Bloc Québécois. Just as it can choose to try to get the powers and resources it needs in order to achieve that by working to renew federalism. That is not our choice. But both options are legitimate, and we recognize that.

While waiting for Quebec to be sovereign, the Bloc Québécois works to promote the sovereignty of Quebec every day. The Bloc works to defend the interests of the Quebec nation. Even without recognition by Canada, the Quebec nation continues to exist, to pay its taxes, to have interests that are unique to it and that are often very different from Canada's. The Bloc continues to defend the interests and promote the values of the Quebec nation. If Quebecers form a nation, it is not up to Canadians to decide how they plan to organize their society.

Because Quebec is the homeland of the Quebec nation, it must have the resources to control its own development. To that end, the Bloc Québécois plans to work to resolve a number of priority issues, including the fiscal imbalance, because that has still not been resolved. Because the Government of Quebec is our national government, it must resolve this problem. As long as it persists, Quebec does not have the resources to implement the choices of Quebecers, and what Quebec does depends on the goodwill of Canada.

Culture and communications are two other priority issues for the Bloc Québécois. Because Quebecers form a nation, telecommunications and broadcasting must be under Quebec's jurisdiction. As well, because the Quebec nation exists, Ottawa must recognize Quebec's culture and identity in its cultural policies and legislation.

Quebec's standing on the international scene is a third priority issue for the Bloc Québécois. Because Quebecers form a nation, they must be able to express themselves on the international scene in their jurisdictions. Quebec is fully sovereign in the jurisdictions the Constitution gives it. It must be able to fully exercise its powers in those jurisdictions, including in international relations.

What is a nation? The word "nation" can refer to two different things. When applied to a state or territory, the word "nation" can mean "country". That is the meaning of the word in United Nations, an organization of which Quebec cannot unfortunately be a member yet because it is not sovereign. So, if the motion said "Quebec is a nation", some people could say that that means that Quebec is a country. But that is not what the motion says. It asks the House to recognize that "the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada."

When the word "nation" is applied to people, it does not mean "country". According to the Larousse dictionary, it designates a "large human community which, most of the time, lives on a common territory and has historic, linguistic and cultural unity and the desire to live together". That is the meaning of today's motion.

In Quebec, there is a long-time consensus that Quebecers form a nation. On October 30, 2003, the Quebec National Assembly unanimously adopted the following motion: "That the National

Assembly reaffirm that the people of Quebec form a nation". The motion does not say that Quebecers form a nation if Canada remains what it is or if Quebec opts for sovereignty. It simply says that the people of Quebec form a nation. There was a reason why the National Assembly chose to reaffirm the existence of a Quebec nation.

• (1210)

This resolution repeated what all the Quebec governments have been saying for decades. I will quote a few, including Maurice Duplessis, the leader of the Union Nationale party, who said "The Canadian confederation is a treaty of union between two nations". He said that in April 1946, not yesterday.

Jean Lesage, a Liberal, said:

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

Jean Lesage, a good Liberal and former premier of Quebec, said that in November 1963.

Daniel Johnson Sr., another unionist, said:

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

I could also quote René Lévesque:

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

That was in June 1980.

Jacques Parizeau, a good PQ premier, said:

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

Lucien Bouchard was once a Conservative, but he finally opened his eyes and realized that the Quebec nation deserved better than the Conservative Party. In October 1999, he said:

Quebec is the only majority francophone society on the North American continent with a well-defined land base and political institutions which it controls. The Quebec people have all the classic attributes of a nation... The Quebec people adhere to the democratic concept of a nation characterized by its language, French, and a diverse culture, and which is broadly open to international immigration.

The Bloc Québécois' Bill C-482 is extremely important. We know that it was introduced in this House by the hon. member for Drummond. The bill calls on the federal government—because it was obvious that the federal government did not have the will to do so—to recognize the Charter of the French Language within Quebec and extend its application to businesses under federal jurisdiction and—as we will see later—more specifically under the Canada Labour Code.

*Business of Supply*

To avoid any ambiguity, it is essential to state specifically in the Official Languages Act that French is Quebec's official language. It must be done because this Conservative government is promoting bilingualism in Quebec. And Quebec being totally surrounded by a sea of anglophones and being constantly bombarded by the anglophone culture through television, radio and the Internet, when bilingualism is being promoted in a nation like Quebec and in a city like Montreal, the French language loses ground, particularly in Montreal. The situation is probably not as critical in Lévis—Bellechasse, but in Montreal the French language is certainly losing ground: 25% of Montrealers work in English.

This amendment is not purely symbolic. It states, to a certain extent, the intent of the legislator. In this regard, the Barreau du Québec said this:

Jurisprudence, also, seems to consistently demonstrate that the preamble is always important, though the circumstances in a matter, such as the clarity of the provision, justifies setting aside any indications of intent that may be found in the preamble.

It then becomes an insurance policy provided that the body of the act is also amended. The Official Languages Act essentially applies to the Government of Canada and its institutions, and as mentioned earlier, under section 16 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, it is impossible to amend any provisions dealing with institutionalized bilingualism within the federal government without amending the Constitution.

However, two parts of the act can be amended, namely part VII, which deals with the advancement of English and French in Canadian society, and part X, which deals in part with the mandate of the Commissioner of Official Languages.

The amendments proposed by the Bloc Québécois will require a commitment by the federal government not to interfere with the objectives of the Charter of the French Language. It is important to remind members that the recognition of the Charter of the French Language does not in any way diminish the rights and privileges of the anglophone minority in Quebec under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. These amendments are strictly limited to the power of the federal government to interfere with language policy in Quebec.

• (1215)

The specific mention of a provincial legislation in a federal statute is allowed, and it is even common. This is called a statutory reference. It means that the government recognizes the provisions made by another Canadian legislature. For example, the Canada Labour Code includes a statutory reference about minimum wage that says the provinces are to set the hourly minimum wage. This is section 178 of the Canada Labour Code. The bill contains an amendment dealing with that.

Almost 10% of the labour force in Quebec is under the Canada Labour Code. These workers are under federal jurisdiction and are employed by companies that do not comply with Bill 101. A federal piece of legislation is needed in order to have them comply. In this regard, two or three industries are usually mentioned, but I will give a more extensive listing.

The Canada Labour Code applies to: works or undertakings connecting a province with another province or country, such as railways, bus operations, trucking, pipelines, ferries, tunnels,

bridges, canals, telephone and cable systems; all extra-provincial shipping and services connected with such shipping, such as longshoring; air transport, aircraft and airports; radio and television broadcasting—all our radio and television stations in Quebec; banks; defined operations of specific works that have been declared by Parliament to be for the general advantage of Canada or of two or more provinces, such as flour, feed and seed cleaning mills, feed warehouses, grain elevators and uranium mining and processing; and Federal Crown corporations where they are engaged in works or undertakings that fall within section 91 of the Constitution Act, 1867, or where they are an agency of the Crown, for example the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority.

Here are examples of the number of employees in some of the enterprises coming under the Canada Labour Code. Bell Canada, which is under federal jurisdiction, had 17,241 employees in 2006. In the financial sector, the Royal Bank has 7,600 and the National Bank of Canada has 10,299. In the interprovincial transportation sector, Air Canada has 7,657.

It is estimated that there are approximately 200,000 Quebecers working in an environment that does not comply with Bill 101 in Quebec, that is a little less than 10% of Quebec workers. The amendment proposed by the Bloc Québécois adds to Part 1 of the Canada Labour Code a provision that stipulates that “any federal work, undertaking or business carrying on activities in Quebec is subject to the requirements of the Charter of the French Language”. That provision responds to the demand made in the Larose report of 2001. I refer to Gérald Larose, then and still president of the Conseil de la souveraineté.

I can give a very good example of this Conservative government's lack of respect for the Quebec nation. It occurred last year right after the recognition of the Quebec nation. That motion was, I repeat, adopted in this House in November 2006. Within a week or two of that date, the Minister of Labour tabled Bill C-55 in this House.

This bill, which was a reworking of the bankruptcy legislation, contained a clause that ran counter to the Quebec Civil Code and made certain RRSPs seizable. What this Conservative government wanted was to see bankrupt small investors lose the money they had put aside over the years to certain major finance companies I shall not name here. Major credit card companies. That is what this government wanted to do, which runs counter to one of the things that differentiates the Quebec nation, its civil code. This runs counter to the values of the Quebec nation. This is not the approach we take to working people. We respect what they have put aside over the years.

Finally, after six months, the Bloc Québécois managed to get that legislation amended. Not a single Conservative member of this House spoke up for the investors of Quebec.

• (1220)

**Mr. Luc Harvey (Louis-Hébert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have rarely heard so much foolishness in such a short time. It is unbelievable.

*Business of Supply*

The last example was about a bill for the protection of employees. We were not talking about credit cards or banks, but about protecting the earnings of employees who had not been paid by the owner of a company. To compare that to big banks smacks of demagoguery.

Once again, it is a false debate. That will be the subject of my question. The Bloc waited 17 years before raising this topic, and it is doing so at a time when there is a threat of a world-wide recession and difficulties at many levels. Today, the priority for the Bloc Québécois is the application of Bill 101 to the Canada Labour Code. Frankly, nobody raised that topic with me during the last two weeks while I was in my riding, and I spoke with more than 2,000 people.

Can my colleague tell me why she waited 17 years to raise this subject in the House?

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée:** Mr. Speaker, the member should do his homework. It is not surprising that he has not defended Quebec workers because he does not know his history.

The objective of Bill C-55 was to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act. Of course, it included a section that created a program to protect the earnings of workers whose employer had declared bankruptcy. That was a part of Bill C-55. I invite all those who are listening to us now to look for the bill on the Internet. It is a bill that dates from 2006 or 2007. In fact, the largest part of this bill deals with an overhaul of the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act.

I will return to this example, because it is an excellent one. It is a bit complicated to explain and that is why it never made the headlines. Bill C-55 included a section that stated that from now on some RRSPs could be seized by big finance companies. Not only has this Conservative government done nothing to protect the savings of workers, but, worse, it has done nothing to protect the Quebec Civil Code. How can one believe that this Conservative government is open to the Quebec nation? It is not. It took the Bloc Québécois six months to get it to listen to reason. I say that it is a good example, but it is an excellent example. There is no need to prove the usefulness of the Bloc, but from time to time we must remind everyone just how useful the Bloc is. In the end, the Bloc Québécois used a unanimous motion from the Quebec National Assembly to make this government listen to reason. The government finally gave in and accepted the amendment from the Bloc.

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform you that I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the hon. member for Louis-Hébert, who does tremendous work on the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

It is my pleasure to rise on this opposition day to show how important it is to my Conservative colleagues, those from Quebec and from all over the country, to support and promote the French language and linguistic duality all across Canada.

We appreciate that this is a partisan debate and that our colleagues from the Bloc are looking for new causes to fight for in order to justify their presence in Ottawa. However, I intend to show that they should try to find another issue today.

Linguistic duality is one of the core values of Canadians. I listened to my colleagues from the Bloc. They are proud Quebecers. Sometimes, they have to travel out of the country. I ask them, who defends linguistic duality? Who makes sure that we have French

schools all over the country? Who finances these schools? Who supports them? The federal government does, of course, along with the other provinces, who have the legal responsibility to do so.

In this regard, I would like to recall that even before there were Conservative members from Quebec, all Conservative members supported strengthening the Official Languages Act, which is an important piece of legislation here in the country and I congratulate them for this. We were not there but they kept watch and made it possible for Canada's linguistic legislative framework to be strengthened. So, we see that the Conservative tradition of promoting linguistic duality is not something new. We are always keen to promote linguistic duality throughout the country.

The situation is special in Quebec. It is known that Quebec is the cradle of French civilization in North America. It is certainly the place where the first chapters of Canadian history were played out thanks to Europe's influence here, on North American soil, although naturally the aboriginals were there well before us. So, that is the cornerstone of promoting French today.

It is interesting because not only the Canadian government, but also the government currently in place in Quebec, have understood the promotion and leadership roles that Quebec must play within the Canadian federation in promoting French throughout the country. We are happy to work with them in this regard and we salute their initiatives.

So, we work in a complementary manner to promote French throughout the country, including in Quebec, and internationally. The presence of the French language and culture is asset, an economic asset, a gauge of our country's unique character which defines us in comparison to the Americans, for example. This of course, requires strong support and willingness from various levels of government.

Moreover, a few months ago in Halifax, the individual who was at that time Minister of International Cooperation and Minister for La Francophonie and Official Languages met with her provincial counterparts. They discussed various topics such as services in French and exchanges of professional resources between provinces and territories for the purpose of helping to revitalize living environments and improving the quality of resources and services for citizens. We know, with regard to labour mobility, how important it is to ensure that French is promoted, not only in Quebec, but everywhere in the country and that is what is being done.

In addition, our minister and the other ministers paid special attention to youth and young francophones. We want them to develop a sense of pride in their francophone and Acadian identity. Two of my nephews were born and have grown up in Ontario, where they go to school in French. They are very proud to be Ontarians, and they are equally proud of their francophone heritage, which does them credit.

To promote this pride among our francophone youth, I went to Saint-Boniface just over a month ago to announce Government of Canada support for two initiatives. The first targeted Franco-Manitoban youth. It was a few days before Louis Riel Day. Franco-Manitoban identity is a definite asset to Manitoba and enriches the province's culture.

*Business of Supply*

•(1225)

I announced two initiatives. The first will help Franco-Manitoban youth organize French-language sporting events and take part in the Jeux de la francophonie canadienne. We will see the results of this initiative in the coming weeks and months, as young French Canadians perform in sporting events.

There are other Government of Canada initiatives that support francophone communities. I am thinking in particular of Quebec's policy on Canadian Francophonie, which is a good example of how our actions complement one another from sea to sea. We encourage our Bloc Québécois colleagues to support these initiatives by the Government of Quebec. Quebec has created a tool for sharing its expertise in various fields with the other governments to help them provide French-language services, confirming Quebec's importance and leadership role in la Francophonie and especially Canadian Francophonie.

This summer, the eyes of the international francophone community will be on Quebec City, where the Francophone Summit will be held in conjunction with the festivities marking Quebec City's 400th anniversary. All my colleagues from the area and I cannot wait to welcome representatives of the world's francophone nations and share our pride in our culture and language.

Just this morning we were working on cooperation agreements between the federal government and the agencies representing linguistic communities. This applies to the culture, communications, education, economic development and health sectors. These sectors are central to the Government of Canada's priority measures and the communities are telling us that they appreciate the improvements our government has made, namely in terms of multi-year funding.

These are small agencies with few people and spending a third of their time filling out forms is a waste of their time. The Department of Canadian Heritage, led by our excellent minister, suggested that these agencies make multi-year applications and fill out just one form. Their funding would thereby be assured for a number of years. That suggestion has been very well received by these groups.

Promoting the French language across Canada requires strong ties between francophones from Quebec and francophones from the rest of the country. In that regard, we truly have a great partner in the Government of Quebec.

Demographics, the aging population and the need for labour are major challenges. This evening, the Bloc Québécois will have the opportunity to promote labour mobility, namely the mobility of francophones from around the world who want to come and work here. There are francophones who want to come and work in Lévis' hospitals. Those specialists are needed.

Because of the red tape and the long waiting lists we have inherited from the previous government, we are currently unable to welcome these people who want to live here and prosper. That is why I am anxious to support the bill on immigration and francophone immigration.

In Quebec, as elsewhere in Canada, immigration plays a critical role. This evening we could take concrete action instead of passing a motion that seems rather futile to me. It should be noted that a

growing number of immigrants in the province are choosing to live in French. I have a Statistics Canada analysis that I invite my Bloc Québécois colleagues to read. In fact, the Standing Committee on Official Languages is going to hear from witnesses from Statistics Canada. They are welcome.

According to Mr. Jean-Pierre Corbeil, the increasing popularity of French in plants, offices and businesses is due to an increasing stream of working immigrants coming from France, Haiti, Morocco and Tunisia

This evening, my colleagues from the Bloc can take concrete action to increase the use of French at work in Quebec and across the country by supporting the immigration bill. Our government is taking concrete action and we are very proud to do so.

I would have a lot more to say and many more examples to give to show how proud our government is to support and promote linguistic duality across the country. We are particularly proud of our involvement in Quebec City's 400th anniversary celebrations. In fact, our Prime Minister has reminded us that at its beginnings Canada was French.

•(1230)

We invite Canadians from all over the country to Quebec City this summer to celebrate its 400th anniversary and to appreciate this linguistic diversity.

I will gladly answer any questions my colleagues may have. I thank you for your attention, Mr. Speaker.

•(1235)

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I carefully listened to my colleague. There is one thing he did not understand. What he said is all well and good, except that it does not apply. My colleague should understand one thing in life: Lévis-Bellechasse is Lévis-Bellechasse, but there is also the rest of Quebec. He should also understand another thing, and that is what we are seeking through the motion introduced this morning. I could reread a passage from it for him.

With respect to language of work, we do not mean that it is only French in Quebec and that we do not care about the rest. He did not understand that? That is not what we are asking. That is not what is in the motion. It is true that it may have been mistranslated from English into French.

Nevertheless, here is what I have to tell him: Bell Canada has 17,241 employees; TELUS has 4,400; Rogers Communications has 3,299; CanWest Global has 519 employees; CTV Global Media, 413; Cogeco, 1,355; Astral Media, 1,400 employees; the Royal Bank, 7,600; Scotiabank, 1,500; the Toronto-Dominion Bank, 2,323; the CIBC, 3,153; the Bank of Montreal, 5,000 employees; the National Bank of Canada, 10,299; ACE Aviation Holdings, 7,657; and Canadian Pacific, 1,250 employees. Could I continue like this for three days?

Does he not think that these people have the right to work in French in Quebec?

**Mr. Steven Blaney:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue for his question. My answer is: absolutely.

*Business of Supply*

He has given us some figures. There are a lot of employees. However, I have only one figure to give him that embraces all those statistics that he has just given us. It is another statistic: nearly 95% of Quebecers most often or regularly use French at work. That figure was up from 2001, according to the last 2006 survey.

Consequently, in the vast majority of cases, workers in Quebec use French. They use other languages, of course, because Quebec is a nation—if I may borrow that expression—which is open to interprovincial trade, to North American trade and to international trade. And that takes place in all languages.

Today, we should instead urge our businesses to speak a number of languages—Spanish, Russian, Chinese. That is what should be done. Linguistic diversity should be expanded.

I remind him that nearly 74% of people in the city of Montreal speak French. It can readily be seen that French is used in the labour market. This evening, he has a chance to make it so that French is used even more, by encouraging francophone workers to immigrate. Therefore I urge him to support the bill this evening.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** We have time for one more quick question.

The hon. member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert.

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to what the member for Lévis—Bellechasse said. If he thinks the status of French in Quebec is as great as he says—and he ought to remove his rose-coloured glasses—it is because he failed to take into account all the employees and workers who receive a work schedule, not an *horaire de travail* on Monday mornings, but who do not want to speak English, because they cannot, for various reasons.

The member also fails to make the distinction between individual bilingualism or multilingualism, which is desirable, and the status of French in a given community.

I would like to ask him why he will not support this motion to defend the interests of Quebec and promote Quebecers' values.

**Mr. Steven Blaney:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question and for her interest in French at work.

As I said earlier, close to 95% of Quebecers speak French at work. The motion thus seems to be superfluous.

Thankfully, the Government of Canada is here to defend French when Quebecers, who are quite mobile, go abroad to work.

In this regard, I invite her to support our bill to let more qualified workers come to Canada, especially francophones, in order to improve the status of French in businesses across Quebec and Canada.

• (1240)

**Mr. Luc Harvey (Louis-Hébert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker and distinguished colleagues, as part of this debate on the Bloc motion, I would like to speak to my colleagues in this House about how important the influence of the French language in Canada and the world is to the government, and what the Canadian government is doing in this respect.

Canada's official languages policy and the status it confers on the French language are part of the very nature of this country. This policy is a reflection of the desire of francophones and anglophones throughout the country to live together, and is a sort of social contract between our two major linguistic communities. The government strongly defends these founding principles of Canada.

As for Quebec City's 400th anniversary, we should not forget that Canada was born in French, as our Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, has said many times. Quebec and the French language are at the heart of Canada, its history and its identity. So an event like the 400th anniversary of Quebec City, for example, is important to all Canadians. The federal government is making a considerable contribution to the anniversary celebrations, through organizations such as the Department of Canadian Heritage, Canada Economic Development and Parks Canada. Quebec City will also host the next Summit of La Francophonie, as announced by Prime Minister Stephen Harper at the summit held in Bucharest in September 2006.

Our government is very pleased to have the opportunity to work with Quebec to strengthen the presence of the French language and culture throughout the world. The summit is also a unique opportunity for Canada to promote a strong and diversified Canadian francophonie.

This gathering will bring heads of state and government from all Francophonie countries to Canada. The last time this happened was in 1999 in Moncton, New Brunswick. Our country has a lot to be proud of when it comes to the influence of its francophonie within the international Francophonie. It is no coincidence that francophone heads of state and government are turning to Canada to hold their discussions. Canada is a beacon of support for the distribution and promotion of the French language.

The 2007 federal budget announced, for instance, that the federal government would contribute \$52 million to the Francophone Summit. We will ensure that francophones from all parts of Canada are represented in the activities surrounding the summit. This support for the Francophone Summit shows how committed the government is to ensuring not only that Canada's francophone aspect is fully represented on the international stage but also that Canada as a whole benefits from the fantastic advantages of having French as one of its official languages.

Spoken by more than 200 million people, French is an official language in 29 countries. Canada is very aware of the importance of its French fact and is determined to help it shine on the international stage. Canada was one of the first countries, therefore, to promote the Francophonie by participating actively in the creation and development of its numerous institutions. Canada helped found the Agence de coopération culturelle et technique, which was established in Niamey, in Niger, in 1970 and eventually became the International Organization of the Francophonie.

*Business of Supply*

Canada has been playing a leading role ever since and is a member of all the multilateral institutions and ministers' conferences of the Francophonie. The Government of Canada is the second largest provider of funds after France, with a contribution of more than \$40 million a year for the International Organization of the Francophonie and francophone institutions.

For Canada, belonging to the Francophonie is more than just talk, as the Bloc Québécois is so wont to do. It means aligning Canada with a rich network of 68 countries and governments that have the French language in common. This network extends from Europe, Africa and the Middle East all the way to the Antilles, the Indian Ocean, the Pacific Ocean, and our own continent. It gives Canadians more opportunity to shine internationally in the areas of language and culture, politics, economics, new technologies and international cooperation.

• (1245)

Finally, it enables the rest of the world to truly appreciate Canada's original contribution to the building of a modern international Francophonie open to diversity.

Canada's membership in the Francophonie is one of the main thrusts of its foreign policy. Domestically, Canada's participation in the Francophonie highlights the linguistic duality of our country and helps the French fact in Canada assert itself and thrive. Internationally, the Francophonie is a natural zone of Canadian influence. It is an area of multilateral cooperation and dialogue where Canada can play a major role and promote the values that Canadian want to share.

The government goes to great lengths to involve Quebec and New Brunswick in the Francophonie and both these provinces enjoy participating government status in it. In the case of Quebec, this status was granted back in the early 1970s.

Thanks to this cooperative approach by the federal government and these provincial governments, Quebec and New Brunswick have been able to play a major role in the work of the Francophone Summits. There is no doubt that the Francophone Summit to come in Quebec City will clearly demonstrate the kind of cooperation that can exist between the governments of Quebec and Canada when it comes to supporting the French language and culture.

I should also mention that the Francophonie has contributed significantly to the adoption, by UNESCO, of a convention that makes cultural diversity an inescapable frame of reference. As we know, this convention formally recognizes, in international law, the fact that cultural goods are different from other goods.

Given the importance that we attach to the strengthening and thriving of the French fact and, of course, to the many other facets of our country's cultural diversity, it is not surprising that we were the first ones to ratify the new Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, which is a critical treaty for the future of cultural diversity at the world level. In so doing, Canada confirmed its historic leadership role regarding an initiative that is providing the international community with a means to draw all the benefits of our diverse cultures and identities, this for generations to come.

I should also point out that, once again, the cooperation between the governments of Canada and Quebec has been exemplary. Our two governments worked in close cooperation to ensure the adoption of the convention and the success of the initial implementation phases.

Such cooperation efforts with Quebec show how the respective initiatives of the Canadian and Quebec governments can complement and strengthen each other. In fact, considering that the challenge of preserving Canada's French language and culture must be met increasingly in the broader context of North American integration and of globalization, I firmly believe that the governments of Quebec and Canada must work together to consolidate a true francophone critical mass within the Canadian, North American and global village.

That is why the Canadian government wants to work to promote the French language in the context of a unifying, inclusive and respectful vision of all the francophone realities of our country. Our approach aims to create a francophone space to connect francophiles from Quebec, from minority communities and from every cultural origin. There are a number of ways to achieve that, but the cultural sector is definitely a preferred option in this respect.

So, whether the purpose is to strengthen the French fact at the international level or within the country, the Canadian and Quebec governments are going to have to work increasingly more closely to strengthen ties between francophones and francophiles in Canada, in Quebec and elsewhere, to promote the establishment of sound partnerships, and to generate concrete and effective measures, which means ensuring that their respective actions complement each other.

• (1250)

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague just as I listened to the members for Lévis—Bellechasse and Louis-Hébert. And whatever people say is happening across Canada, the United States and elsewhere, I will give two examples to the contrary.

First of all, we only need to ask 99.9% of sports federations in Canada which language they use. Second, the working language at the Canadian Olympic Association is English. I know; I am a member. When there is time, we translate into French. When our meeting is in Montreal, we manage to translate into French. I know from personal experience. These are practical examples from everyday life.

You can speak French going through security at the Quebec City airport. However, in Montreal, when you go through security at Dorval airport, you are only greeted in English, thank you very much. No matter what is said about things changing, they are not.

The motion put forward today by the Bloc Québécois is not asking for the moon and the stars. It is simply asking that people working in Quebec in businesses under federal jurisdiction be able to work in French. It is that simple.

I will give an example. The Royal Bank, the Bank of Montreal, and I will add the CIBC to make my colleagues happy, send out their notices and schedules solely in English because they come from Toronto.

*Business of Supply*

This next question is for my colleague: does he not believe that the only thing we are asking is that workers be able to work in French in Quebec? It seems clear to me.

**Mr. Luc Harvey:** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois' boss, Pauline Marois, recently spoke about the need to be bilingual in Quebec—in a francophone Quebec, of course—and to understand both languages and do business in one or the other.

I would like my Bloc Québécois colleagues to check with their head office to see if everyone there fully understands the motion they are presenting today.

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I do not understand anything that was said by the Conservative members who just spoke, either the member for Lévis—Bellechasse or the member for Louis-Hébert. I do not understand them. I do not understand their language. They speak French, but what they are saying is incomprehensible, especially the latter, who was mistaken about Bill C-55. As soon as someone makes such obvious errors about the content of a bill, how can anyone take the rest of their speech seriously?

Personally, I simply cannot, especially since this is a Bloc Québécois motion concerning French in the workplace but they are talking about the international Francophonie. When asked about the weather, he replies that it is twelve noon. It makes no sense.

This Conservative government and their members from Quebec are completely disconnected from Quebec. That is why they do not understand that in Quebec, Quebecers want to work in French.

Here, Conservative members across the floor can work in French, thanks to simultaneous interpretation. In fact, it is often said that, here in Ottawa, there are two official languages: English and simultaneous interpretation. These days, it is exceptional for anyone to speak so long in French.

Here is my question for my hon. colleague. How does he explain the fact that every time I take an Air Canada flight, the flight attendants are all unilingual anglophones?

• (1255)

**Mr. Luc Harvey:** Mr. Speaker, really, it is pure demagoguery. It is unbelievable. While the Bloc Québécois keeps arguing about where Bill 101 figures in the Canada Labour Code, I can say that my government has taken concrete steps.

In fact, a report has been written recently regarding the official languages. Since the Government of Canada is the largest employer in the country, universities and educational institutions are being asked to inform students that, if they want to work as public servants, they will have to be bilingual. It is not the Bloc Québécois who accomplished that, nor will it ever be because, after 17 years, the Bloc has nothing but a blank page to show for its efforts.

The member may well leave the House while I am answering her question. Pardon me, Mr. Speaker, I should not have said that she left the House while I was responding to her.

There is something else. When I talk about bilingualism, in Europe, they are—

**The Speaker:** Resuming debate.

The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mister Speaker, there will be no demagoguery here today. I will take the floor and will share my time with the hon. member for Laval.

I would like my Conservative friends to note that in me they will not find a demagogue who will run in fear with such a file. I will give you concrete examples. I will speak about an area I know very well. My colleague from the region of Quebec should know one thing: I sat on the Canadian Olympic Committee for 25 years; I was president of the Canadian Cycling Association for 10 years; I was on the international scene in the bicycling field for at least 15 years and I have begun working with the World Anti-Doping Agency, and when one attends these meetings, the working language is English.

If the conservative Members of Parliament from Quebec understood French in the least, they would understand that the motion that we have tabled today is just one step toward the recognition of the Quebec nation, which the current government boasted that it promoted.

If the Quebec nation wishes to say something to our francophone colleagues in the Conservative Party, the latter should be able to read what the motion asks for. It asks that the language of work apply to employees of companies under federal jurisdiction on Quebec territory. I will repeat myself to allow my francophone colleagues from other parties to translate this into English so that it is understood. The only request in the motion is that, with regard to the language of work, the Charter of the French Language should apply to employees of businesses under federal jurisdiction on Quebec territory.

This is not a revolution. It is simply a step in the right direction to recognize employees who work in Quebec in businesses under federal jurisdiction. I have named several, including Bell Canada, TELUS, Rogers, CanWest, CTV Global, Cogeco, Astral Media, the Royal Bank, Scotiabank, TD Bank, CIBC, the BMO Financial Group, the National Bank of Canada, ACE Aviation Holdings, which is Air Canada, and Canadian Pacific. We want the people who work in these companies to be able to speak French. I think it is quite natural to speak French in Quebec. I am not talking about the individual who works for Air Canada in Flin Flon, Manitoba. It would be nice if he spoke French, but that is his own problem. We are speaking of employees who work in Quebec and who deal with Quebecers every day or almost every day.

I can give you some examples regarding Air Canada. Mr. Speaker, if you arrive in Montreal, at Dorval airport—and I hope you do—you will be surprised when you check in at the business class counter. Because all members of this House travel in business class. English is the language used. Yes, some people speak French, but I guarantee you you had better request it.

Let us talk about gate security at Montreal airport—I mention it because I experience it. I can understand in the case of international flights or flights to the United States: there is U.S. customs, even though there is Quebec customs, which is supposedly francophone, Canadian customs. Nevertheless, security officers, those who check your luggage at the domestic flights counters, greet you in English only. That is unacceptable and that is what we are criticizing. This is what we want.

*Business of Supply*

•(1300)

The motion the Bloc Québécois is introducing today does not constitute an armed revolution.

I have heard some things. Unfortunately for the members opposite, I understand English very well. I took intensive English courses when I sat on the Canadian Olympic Association and the Canadian Cycling Association, where everything is done in English. Earlier I heard it said in English that the Bloc was useless and that the things it proposed were completely crazy. We have long since stopped listening to our Quebec colleagues in the Conservative Party who say the same thing in French. However, the discomfort on the anglophone side is noticeable.

We should have taken the time to explain matters to our colleagues, including those in the Liberal Party, which is not any different. Earlier I heard our colleague from Hull—Aylmer, whose position greatly surprised me. He lives next door to a region very important for Quebec, next door to Ottawa. However, his position is that our motion is pointless, the French language is protected, and everything is just fine. My answer to him is that we have a problem. He has not been to the Ottawa airport in a long time. He may not have taken a flight recently, but I have. I can say that there are security problems at Ottawa airport. I can also talk about Air Canada and WestJet. He may tell me that WestJet is more from the other side.

We are asking that those who work in enterprises under federal jurisdiction located in Quebec be allowed to speak French if they so wish. That is not asking too much. That is all what this Bloc Québécois motion is asking today. If Quebec is a nation, let us take a step forward and say it explicitly. That is what we are asking in this motion today.

We are asking the House to recognize Quebec as a nation. People are wondering what a nation is. It is defined as a large community of people, typically living within the same territory and having, to a certain extent, a shared history, language, culture and economy. That does not come from the members for Louis-Hébert and Lévis—Bellechasse. It is how the Larousse dictionary defines the word “nation”. We did not invent that definition. That is what a nation is.

Here is how the Petit Robert defines the word “nation”: “Group of people, generally large, characterized by awareness of its unity and a desire to live together”. That is what a nation is. That is exactly what we are asking. To achieve that, we are asking—and I will say it very slowly again so that my francophone colleagues from the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party can translate that into their own words—that all enterprises under federal jurisdiction located in Quebec comply with the Charter of the French Language as it applies to language of work.

The Bloc Québécois is not asking for a revolution with this motion today. If the recognition of Quebec as a nation really means something, then let us allow employees of enterprises under federal jurisdiction located in Quebec to work in French.

•(1305)

**Mr. Luc Harvey (Louis-Hébert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again today, we have been hearing all kinds of things here. I have been hearing so many unbelievable things that I feel quite disoriented. While people in Europe are typically bilingual and speak a third

language to boot, the Bloc Québécois is trying to fix things so that people speak only one.

We have been here for just two years, and in that time, we have resolved the fiscal imbalance and the UNESCO issue, and we invested \$350 million in Quebec's green plan. We also resolved the softwood lumber issue.

A few weeks ago, I tried to table the Bloc Québécois' record: a blank sheet of paper. Has anything been added to that over the past few days?

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Mr. Speaker, quite simply, if we had not been here during the forestry crisis, I am pretty sure that the member for Lévis—Bellechasse would not have done anything about it. Nor would the member for Louis-Hébert, because I doubt that he was in his riding the last time he saw a tree.

However, with all due respect, I want to set things straight right now. I travelled all around Europe. I visited 58 countries, and I witnessed Czechoslovakia's velvet divorce when it split into Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

Here is what I want to say to the member for Louis-Hébert. In Europe, countries give power to the central governing body, the European Union. We would like to be able to do the same thing. That is all we ask.

If the member for Louis-Hébert wants to take a look at the Bloc Québécois' agenda, all he has to do is check bloc.org. He might be surprised at how much there is to read on the site. It can sometimes be hard to understand.

However, I want him to know that today, we are talking about real issues affecting real Quebeckers.

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciated very much the excellent and very clear speech of my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

Air Canada is a Canadian company under federal jurisdiction, and it operates in Quebec. I would like to put on the record my experience with this company. Again last week, on Tuesday night, I was aboard Air Canada flight 425 to Toronto. The flight attendant in the business class did not speak a single word of French. We were in Montreal. I asked her for newspapers in French, but she told me there were none, since the plane was going to Toronto. On Friday, when I came back from Toronto, I again asked for newspapers in French, but the answer I got was there were none because the plane was coming from Toronto. That is the way it is. That is the kind of bilingualism we get when Bill 101 is not complied with. That is what happens when private companies which operate in Quebec are not required to comply with Bill 101. That is what I mean, and my question to my colleague deals with that.

Does he not agree with me when I say that the Conservative members from Quebec, in the House of Commons, become suddenly helpless and incapable of defending the interests of Quebeckers and their own language? And the most striking evidence of this is that, again today, they refuse to vote for the protection of the French language in Quebec.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. The Conservative Party is controlled by Western Canada. It is something I can accept. There is no problem, and I can live with that. That is the choice they made. But there is one thing they need to understand. They can say what they want in Louis-Hébert, but Quebec's interests have been served much better by the Bloc Québécois since 1993 than they have been by the member for Louis-Hébert and his blank page.

● (1310)

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague's performance is a tough act to follow. He made a truly remarkable speech and has very clearly outlined the situation currently prevailing in Quebec, mainly as a result of the Conservative members who are not standing up for the people they are supposed to represent. That is unfortunate, but we saw that in November 2006. When they voted to recognize Quebec as a nation, they did so because it was a debating contest, it was out of defiance, and they believed it would give nobody any ideas at all. You do not make those kinds of decisions, then shirk your obligations and responsibilities.

When the Quebec government decided to recognize that the aboriginal peoples were nations and that the situation had to be managed with them, people to people, nation to nation, it signed the Paix des Braves. When you think that the Conservative government decided to name the Quebec nation merely because the Bloc Québécois had tabled a motion seeking recognition of that nation, you can wonder what kind of opportunism the government showed in doing so.

The Quebec members of the Conservative government in Quebec do not believe in the nation. We have proof of that today. I heard the Conservative members from Quebec ask my colleague questions that would shame anyone from Quebec. These people must toe the party line, which is to say nothing and do nothing contrary to the Prime Minister's decisions. We know that the Prime Minister does not have Quebec in his sights, but rather Alberta and the western provinces. It is those provinces he wants to please and that he has been pleasing for a long time.

Quebec is thrown some crumbs, as has always been done. People recognized the existence of the Quebec nation long before the Conservatives. I am thinking in particular of someone for whom I have no respect and to whom history has not been kind. I am referring to Maurice Duplessis, who said in 1946 that Quebec was a nation and that no one would strip Quebec of that status. Even Lord Durham, whom my Conservative colleagues must know, declared before Canada came into existence that there were two nations, two peoples warring in this arid, difficult land, which we cleared by the sweat of our brows and which our ancestors developed by the sweat of theirs.

The Conservatives should understand readily and clearly, if they have the slightest pride in their language, that we are not abdicating the right to learn English, Spanish, Russian or Italian. When I meet individuals of other nationalities, I can speak to them in their language. Can the member for Louis-Hébert do the same? I doubt it.

*[The member spoke in Spanish]*

*[ French]*

The Conservative members must stop being so haughty towards the Quebec nation, stop treating us as if we were less than nothing and they must understand that in accepting the premise that we are a nation, they also accept the associated rights, particularly abiding by the laws that are inherent to the Quebec nation. The first law that must be obeyed is Bill 101. The federal government is not being asked to abide by Bill 101 in Alberta or New Brunswick.

● (1315)

We are asking that the federal government abide by Bill 101 in its institutions within Quebec's borders. That is the nature of our request. If the Conservative members who are in power cannot understand the legitimacy of this request, the Quebecers that they represent have a serious problem, and I know that these Quebecers realize it today.

Being elected is not all there is to it. We are not elected to represent just those who voted for us. We are elected to represent all the individuals in our riding and unless I am mistaken, as at least 40% of Quebecers vote for the Bloc Québécois, at least 40% of the individuals residing in the Louis-Hébert riding vote for the Bloc Québécois.

This member does not respect the wishes of his electors. He does not respect that it is a nation as a whole, a people as a whole, that have given themselves laws so that they can survive. In the past, we confirmed that the French language was quickly being lost. We confirmed it. If we do not take steps today, now, to ensure that our grandchildren and great grandchildren will be able to continue to speak French, I am afraid that the Conservatives in Louis-Hébert, Lévis and pretty much all over Quebec will get their wish, and that we will be reduced to speaking English throughout Quebec. We are surrounded by a sea of anglophones.

Is it a sin to want to keep French as the language of belonging? This is my ancestors' language and I am proud to speak it. I hope that the Conservative members from Quebec will see the light and vote as their constituents would like them to vote, that they will be sure to vote as the individuals who live in their ridings would like them to vote. Nobody, whether Conservative, Liberal, NDP, or Bloc, nobody in Quebec wants English to become the official language. Everyone in Quebec wants to keep French as the language of belonging.

They better think twice before making a decision on a vote which, once again, will be historic and will show the Quebec nation the true intentions of the Conservative government when it declared Quebec a nation. This declaration is not enough. We saw it at UNESCO. Having a seat where we can sit and chat with our neighbour is not a big deal when we have to beg for the permission to have an idea and to express it. It is really not a big deal.

*Business of Supply*

It is wrong to claim that the Conservative government has made significant progress in terms of recognizing Quebec as a nation. We were given a title, but what about the rights that go with it? I hope our liberal colleagues realize the importance of the French language in Quebec. I hope they realize the importance of this motion. We are not asking Canada to speak French. We are asking Quebec to keep its language et we are asking those who work for the federal government in Quebec to honour the French language. This is all we are asking.

I thank you for your attention. I will be happy to answer any questions my colleagues may have. I hope they will have the courage to tell their fellow citizens whether or not they are going to support this motion.

• (1320)

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Status of Women, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question of my dear friend from the Bloc, for whom I have great respect, it must be said. Does she think that to be part of the Quebec nation one must be a Quebecker and a sovereigntist or can we federalist Quebeckers be part of it too?

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Mr. Speaker, how glad I am to answer that question. My colleague from Beauport—Limoilou will be happy to know that she is part of the Quebec nation, since all people living in Quebec are part of the Quebec nation.

That is clear. The *Petit Robert*, the *Larousse* and all other dictionaries say so: a nation is comprised of all the persons composing a people living on a defined territory, who have common values and aspirations. No matter what political party one represents, one should be proud to be part of the Quebec nation and to want to preserve the French language in America.

**Mr. Luc Harvey (Louis-Hébert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, earlier, I gave a list of the accomplishments of Conservative members, including those from Quebec. I mentioned UNESCO and the fiscal imbalance, but I could also mention the return of the lands at Mirabel. I could also speak about the Quebec City airport, a matter about which my predecessor from the Bloc did nothing. He too had only a blank page to show. We could also talk about the reopening of the Collège de Saint-Jean. The member for the Bloc was never able to do anything about that. He too has only a blank page to show.

Earlier, in a question I asked, I mentioned that the boss of the Bloc Québécois, Ms. Pauline Marois, talked about the importance of bilingualism and of learning English. Does the hon. member agree with her boss on that?

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that he sat in opposition from 1993 to 2006 and that his party did not do anything during that period. I hope that now that the Conservatives are in power, they will stop blaming the Liberal Party for everything that was not done and that they will start doing something.

His list of accomplishments was exhaustive but very short. I would certainly not be bragging about having done so little in two years; I would be hiding.

I think that the Bloc Québécois has proven its relevance in the Canadian Parliament. Despite the fact that we are sovereigntists, we

have always made responsible decisions. Every time we voted with the government, it was in the interest of Quebec, and what is in the interest of Quebec is often good for everybody else too.

I would ask the member for Louis-Hébert to refrain from presenting such an exhaustive list of his party's accomplishments, because after two years, this list is rather slim.

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would first like to congratulate my colleague from Laval for her excellent speech and for the answers she has given to the Conservative members. It is hard to understand why the Conservatives are asking these kinds of questions because every time they do, they shoot into their own net.

My question to my colleague from Laval is also related to the Bloc's accomplishments. The Bloc achieved something big with the passage of the motion on the Quebec nation. The motion was introduced in November 2006. We all know that the Conservatives, who wanted to pull a fast one on us, decided to take this motion in their own name.

Can the member give us an extensive list of the accomplishments of the governing party, the Conservative party, that helped them move from words to deeds and to solidify that recognition of a Quebec nation?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** The member for Laval has only 30 seconds left.

• (1325)

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Mr. Speaker, it will be a short answer: zero, a blank page.

The blank page referred to by my colleague from Louis-Hébert just now is likely the page he was using to show his fellow citizens all that he has done for the Quebec nation.

[English]

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to take part in the debate on the Bloc Québécois opposition day motion moved by the member for Joliette, which reads:

That, in the opinion of the House, following the recognition of the Quebec nation by this House, the government should move from words to deeds and propose measures to solidify that recognition, including compliance with the language of labour relations of Quebec's Charter of the French language regarding enterprises under federal jurisdiction located in Quebec.

Everybody in the House knows I am fluently bilingual and that normally when I take part in debate I make a point of doing a good part, if not the majority, of my speech in French but, as a member of the linguistic anglophone minority in Quebec, I think it is important that my thoughts on this motion be registered in English.

If we look at the question of official languages and the history of our country, our country came together under the British North American Act, our Confederation, and Quebec was part of that. Our Constitution clearly set out what was federal jurisdiction and what was provincial jurisdiction. It is clear that the language of enterprises and federal agencies comes under federal jurisdiction.

*Business of Supply*

I find it interesting that a party that has made its brand attacking successive federal governments for allegedly overlapping into provincial jurisdiction would now, under the guise of the recognition by this House of the nation of Quebec people, as an excuse to enter into federal jurisdiction.

We have two official languages in Canada and those languages are French and English. Anyone who attempts to say that by having and promoting both official languages somehow opens the door to other languages is making a spurious argument. That is the first thing.

Second, anybody who sits in the House, in my view, has a duty to ensure that linguistic minority rights are protected, and that means anglophones in Quebec and francophones outside of Quebec.

I have a great deal of respect for many of the Bloc MPs but with this motion they are ensuring that the linguistic minority rights of anglophones living within the borders of the province of Quebec will be unprotected. As it stands now, when one looks at the report of the Official Languages Commissioner, anglophones in Quebec are not adequately represented in federal institutions. I will not even talk about provincial institutions.

The Government of Quebec has had an equity employment program for cultural communities and the linguistic minority anglophones and yet anglophones comprise, I believe, possibly 1% of the provincial civil service, and federally, notwithstanding the fact of our presence in Quebec since the very first days, we do not comprise more than 8% of the federal public service in Quebec.

The Official Languages Commissioner has, time and time again, been forced to investigate complaints about the roughshod treatment that the English-speaking minority in Quebec has suffered within federal institutions and now the province would like to see the workplace language of enterprises under federal jurisdiction be French only.

• (1330)

When the Bloc Québécois first tabled its private member's bill, which is where this motion comes from, the Official Languages Commissioner already had concerns about the English-speaking minority in Quebec having equal access to health services, which is provincial jurisdiction, in their mother tongue.

Educationally, an article appeared recently in the paper about how the English-speaking school boards, the teachers and the unions were demanding that the Government of Quebec not institute its pedagogical educational reform. Do members know why? It is because the textbooks that the children need to use to learn the subject matter and from which their final exams will be based on are not yet available.

Therefore, we know there are already difficulties both provincially and federally. Neither government has clean hands when we talk about the English-speaking minority in Quebec and ensuring the protection of our linguistic rights and our rights to services in our language. The Bloc Québécois, which states that it defends all Quebecers, is not defending my rights in Quebec nor is it defending the rights of my community in Quebec. It is not defending the rights of the other English-speaking minority in Quebec.

I will not even begin to speak about the French-speaking minority outside of Quebec because, Lord knows, should this motion be adopted, the Bloc and anyone in the House who votes in favour of this motion will have opened the door for provincial governments outside of Quebec to suddenly decide that the only official language will be English and forget about the French-speaking minority outside of Quebec.

I do not understand the lack of shame on the part of that party. I am a Quebecker. I just heard one of the Bloc members say that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Status of Women is a Quebecker, notwithstanding the fact that she is a federalist. I too am a federalist and, according to the definition that the Bloc member of Parliament just gave, I am a member of the Quebec nation.

In that case, if the Bloc wants to claim that it defends the rights of Quebecers I expect to see it defending my rights in Quebec as the English-speaking minority within Quebec. I am a strong supporter and advocate of bill 101. One of the good effects of that was that my community began to freely choose to send their children to French language schools. They wanted their children to be bilingual so they could work for the provincial government or for private enterprise which come under provincial rule. However, surprise, surprise, we cannot get jobs there even though we speak French.

In this case, the Bloc is not defending my rights as the English-speaking minority in Quebec. It is not defending the rights of my community within Quebec because the only place where we are able to find jobs, notwithstanding the fact that we are bilingual, is in federal institutions. Even there we are not represented as much as we should be, but at least that door is partly open.

I would like to see the Bloc members get up and defend my minority language rights. I would like to see the Bloc members get up and talk about the fact that textbooks that are required in our schools in Quebec are not available in English and that our children are being forced to use photocopies. It is ridiculous. The textbooks are not available because they have not been translated by the government.

• (1335)

**An hon. member:** C'est faux.

**Hon. Marlene Jennings:** Mr. Speaker, I am being told by members of the Bloc that what I am saying is not true. What I am saying is factual. There are textbooks that are required by the ministry of education of Quebec and those textbooks are only available in French. It is up to the ministry of education to ensure those textbooks are also available in a translated form. It has not done that and as a result the school boards are asking that the implementation of the pedagogical reform be delayed.

As a member of an official language minority, it never ceases to amaze me how the Bloc, which claims that it wishes to ensure le fait français in North America, so easily drops the interest, the protection and the defence of those protections of the French-speaking minority outside of Quebec. When it suits the Bloc's purpose, suddenly it is the defender of the French-speaking minority rights outside of Quebec. However, when it does not suit its purpose, it drops them as quick as a hot potato. It is shameful.

*Business of Supply*

I would like to read a few statistics from the Official Language Commissioner's report of 2006-07. On page 26 it states:

Linguistic duality is strongly rooted in Canada's historic and contemporary realities. It has been one of the core values of our country since its inception, and while it has been the subject of heated debates in the past, it is not as emotionally charged as it used to be...82% of Francophones and 74% of Anglophones believe that the two official language groups should enjoy the same quality of education and are willing to dedicate more resources to the minority in order to meet this objective.

That is quite different from what the Bloc is suggesting. It goes on to state:

Canadians now consider it to be at the centre of their country's history, culture and values. In fact, bilingualism and respect for the rights of linguistic minorities currently enjoy unprecedented support in Canada. According to a recent poll carried out in early 2006, 72% of Canadians personally favour bilingualism in Canada, a 16% increase since 2003.

I talked about the fact that anglophones in the federal public service in Quebec are underrepresented. According to the Official Languages Commissioner's annual report 2006-07, it states that "on March 31, 2001 it sat at only 8%". This is unacceptable.

The report goes on to state:

The Commissioner will closely monitor the action undertaken by federal institutions and the Quebec Federal Council to increase Anglophone representation in the federal public service there.

However, there is the report on Canada Post. Why? It is because Canada Post is a crown corporation that comes under federal law and, therefore, it has a legal duty to create a workplace that is conducive to the use of both official languages, promoting English and French. However, Canada Post has had serious problems in the past with regard to ensuring that English-speaking minority employees had their rights respected and there have been complaints.

However, the Official Languages Commissioners who have worked on that file, the previous one, Madam Dyane Adam, and now Mr. Graham Fraser, have seen a real effort on the part of management, particularly senior management in Canada Post, to ensure that Canada Post employees are not penalized if they happen to be members of the English-speaking minority and that their access to senior managerial posts, if they meet the requirement, is not hampered by the fact that they are members of the English-speaking minority, which was the case when I worked there. It also means that managers are able to communicate with each other and properly communicate with the employees.

• (1340)

I want to finish with one little quote from the NDP member for Outremont who was quoted in the Montreal *Gazette* newspaper on October 23, 2007. Apparently he was being interviewed about the piece of legislation that incarnates this particular motion and its relevance to Bill 101. This was his response:

There is absolutely no problem right now in Quebec with the language of work... Bill 101 has taken care of the problem and removed a lot of the tension and ill will that used to exist when people in a majority French province were forced to work in English in the past.

I would take from that then that the NDP will not be supporting the Bloc motion. I would take from that then that the NDP will be very careful about the position that it takes on this particular motion because this particular motion will put the rights of the English speaking minority in Quebec in jeopardy and the rights of the French speaking minority outside of Quebec in jeopardy.

If any of the members of the NDP are thinking about supporting the Bloc motion, I would ask them to think twice about it, and possibly if they need to, think three or four times. I would urge them not to support this motion.

The majority of the English speaking minority in Quebec will take it as an affront and a denial of our minority language rights being afforded and protected within Quebec.

I do not presume to speak for the French speaking minority outside of Quebec although my family members on my mother's side are all Francophone Manitobans. My sense is that they as well will take it as an affront and a denial by the NDP, should they support this motion, of their linguistic speaking rights outside of Quebec and opening the door to provinces outside of Quebec deciding that the only language of work will be French, and that they have no reason whatsoever to protect the linguistic—

**Mrs. Christiane Gagnon:** Quand as-tu les oreilles sensibles?

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Oui madame, je vous poserai une question à ce sujet.

**Hon. Marlene Jennings:** Mr. Speaker, I am hearing cattle calls from the other side saying that this is demagoguery. This is not demagoguery. This is fact.

I voted in favour of the motion recognizing Quebec as a nation. It is not a nation state. It is not an ethnic nation. It is what one would call the sociological term. That is the only way that I can be included in it.

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

**Hon. Marlene Jennings:** I can see that the members from the Bloc are quite upset. They are upset to hear the facts. The only definition of nation in which I am included that speaks to Quebec is the sociological one where a people of different nations, different ethnic groups, come together and choose to live together as a people.

• (1345)

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I must compliment the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine. This was one of the best and most insightful presentations that I have heard from her. She spoke so eloquently about the linguistic speaking rights of Canadians, period.

We all voted for the motion about Quebec being a nation, but when I listened to her speech, I was very proud to be a Canadian because the member was standing up for the rights of all Canadians.

In my family three of our six children are fluent in French. I have been studying French for months trying to learn it. I wish I had learned it as a young child. It is a beautiful language.

We have to recognize the fact that there are many different cultures in our Canada. Would the member please expound a bit more on the linguistic speaking rights of Canadians and why it is so important to support this?

**Hon. Marlene Jennings:** Mr. Speaker, our country was founded by two nations. That is incarnated in our Constitution, which recognizes that and recognizes that we have two official languages.

*Business of Supply*

Successive parties that have formed government over time right up until 2006 have brought into effect different measures and programs and policies in order to attempt to realize and implement the Official Languages Act, and to ensure the protection, defence and enhancement of linguistic minority rights.

I would ask the hon. member on the other side: Why is it that under the current Conservative budget we do not see significant moneys being designated to the action plan on official languages?

This action plan was first created in 2003, funded at \$642 million over five years. It came to an end on March 31, yesterday, and the official languages minorities have been asking this government for months.

I would urge this member to urge her own government to put its money where its mouth is.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I know that my colleague from Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine understands French very well. I saw that when she was on the justice committee. Her speech is worthy of a westerner running down Quebec. I can give examples, and hope my colleague will listen attentively. I would like to know how the rights of francophone Quebecers are being protected in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and the Yukon. That is what I would like to hear.

As well, I find that my colleague is exaggerating. She is a part of the Quebec nation. That question has been answered. The dictionary definition of nation in the *Robert* is a group of people, generally large, characterized by awareness of its unity and a desire to live together. Francophones and anglophones have always lived together in Quebec and they will continue to do so. We will respect them, let the hon. member have no doubt about that.

The only thing I want to ask her is the following: do people working for the federal government or for enterprises under federal jurisdiction have the right to work in French in Quebec? That is what the debate is about.

• (1350)

**Hon. Marlene Jennings:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question because it gives me the chance to provide some information. The Official Languages Act applies to other provinces to the federal public service, to all federal institutions, to all enterprises under federal jurisdiction. For example, a francophone working for a telecommunications company coming under federal jurisdiction is entitled to protection and to claiming his rights under the Official Languages Act.

As for the right of francophones in Quebec working at the federal level, I have worked in the past for a federal agency and I can state that the language of work was French. At that time, and we are talking more than 20 years ago, the documentation from management came only in French, despite the fact that this was a company under federal jurisdiction and one that had to comply with the Official Languages Act.

[*English*]

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed with the statements that the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine has just made in the House. She

has taken one very important aspect, which is the underrepresentation of the anglophone community in Quebec, and from there has extrapolated comments that are very harmful to building the kind of unity in Canada that we all want to see.

Nothing that the Liberal government did in the 13 years it was in power addressed the issue of the historic underrepresentation of the anglophone community in the civil service. The Quebec Liberal Party is in power now and is doing nothing to address that issue, which is a legitimate issue.

However, to then start attacking the principle that in areas of federal legislation people should have access to labour negotiations in French as well as English and that they should actually have access, as she well knows is something of a problem right now, to their managers and be able to speak French, to take that as a divisive measure I find quite exceptional.

My question is very simple. The Liberal Party in western Canada has historically opposed those measures, when the NDP has been pushing forward francophone minority rights, as it did in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Yukon Territory, and also in Alberta with Leo Piquette. The Liberal Party did not speak out against that.

We have heard Justin Trudeau's comments—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Order. The hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine.

**Hon. Marlene Jennings:** Mr. Speaker, I did not take one fact and extrapolate harmful statements. I talked about several issues, one of which is the underrepresentation of anglophones within the Quebec public service, for instance. However, I did note that the Commissioner for Official Languages, in his 2006-07 report, said that it is beginning to edge up. That is one.

Second, the member has not addressed a very real point that I made, which is that this Bloc motion would give authority of provincial legislation over federal in a federal jurisdiction. Should we open the door to that, we would then open the door to provincial governments, if they have language laws, to attempt to declare that the language of work, for instance, in that province would be English and would include the federal public service in that province. That would include private corporations that come under federal jurisdiction in that province.

This is what the motion wants to do in Quebec. Should we allow it and should the NDP vote in favour of it, it would open the door to that taking place in other provinces. That is not fearmongering. That is a fact.

It would mean then that provincial law in the area of linguistic protection would have authority over federal law. Should a province attempt to deny a linguistic minority, the francophone minority, outside of Quebec, the exercise of their rights under federal law, they would be told, no, provincial law has authority.

I would urge the members of the NDP to think twice, think three times, think four times. Do not support the Bloc motion.

*Statements by Members***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

•(1355)

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I notice at the outset how the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, usually so progressive in other areas, illustrates perfectly how the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party close ranks when the opportunity arises to give real flesh, form and substance to the recognition of Quebec as a nation.

As I was listening to the member from Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, I said to myself that it is quite incredible that this party's demands do not even go as far as Claude Ryan's in his beige paper of the 1980s. Every nationalist in the National Assembly demanded the recognition and the primacy of linguistic rights—even in telecommunications in Quebec's case.

As a matter of fact, we must also recall, delving quickly into history, that the current Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities was an ardent nationalist when he was responsible for communications in the National Assembly. He was following in the footsteps of Daniel Johnson, Robert Bourassa and even Louis-Alexandre Taschereau, the Liberal premier who, as early as 1929, was asking for primacy rights. Now, we cannot say that we are going further than Claude Ryan's beige paper in the 1980s, which asked for overriding linguistic rights.

It is sad, and it is a good reminder that, if we are to learn a lesson from this debate, it is that, without the Bloc Québécois in the House of Commons, the voice of Quebec and its best interests would never be heard. Language is one of those paramount interests. Why is this so? Because just very recently, the latest census told us that, for the first time in our history, the percentage of people in Quebec whose mother tongue is French is under 80%. If we need to convince ourselves as parliamentarians of the overriding, non-partisan and historic need for Quebec to be fully master of its own linguistic house, we only need to look at the latest census.

Our grandparents learned that speakers of French made up 33% of Canada's population. We could read that in our history books not so long ago. The latest census tells us that, in Canada now, not quite 22% have French as their mother tongue. So, in this House, we cannot discuss the matter as if it were trivial. I call on all members to recognize Quebec for what it is, the linguistic expression of the French fact.

*[English]*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** The hon. member will have six and a half minutes left after question period to finish his remarks.

Now we will move on to statements by members. The hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

•(1400)

*[English]***GUELPH GREENBELT**

**Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last week our government provided a green municipal fund investment of \$2 million to the city of Guelph in Wellington county. This will allow Guelph to plan the city's growth as part of the province of Ontario's "Places to Grow" plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe so that sustainable growth occurs with minimal environmental impacts.

I am particularly proud to support Guelph's request to expand the greenbelt to include the city and the southern part of Wellington county, an important part of the Grand River watershed.

This watershed is home to vital farmlands and is an important part of the Carolinian forest zone, an area with the highest biodiversity in Canada and, in this country, found only in southern Ontario.

It is also home to over a dozen species at risk of extinction, including the great egret, the Jefferson salamander and the green snake. All are at risk of extinction due to habitat loss, most of it caused by urban sprawl.

By launching these initiatives in cooperation with our government, Mayor Farbridge, Guelph city council and the citizens of Guelph are making it clear that they are committed to environmental action for today and for tomorrow.

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**DARTMOUTH WORK ACTIVITY SOCIETY**

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Dartmouth Work Activity Society officially opened its new home in Dartmouth.

For over 25 years this organization has worked to help people overcome barriers to employment. It works on life skills, academic upgrading and skills development and assists in job placements such as food service, office skills, woodworking and janitorial services.

For Canada to be competitive we need to maximize the potential of every individual. It is good for all citizens and necessary for a country such as Canada to remain competitive.

Organizations such as the Dartmouth Work Activity Society are community champions and work for all of us. The board members, led by Barb Hart, deserve our thanks for their vision, determination and leadership in enabling this move to a new facility. The staff members, led by Colin Herbert, are hard working and inspiring.

Government partners such as the Nova Scotia Community Services and Service Canada, along with community organizations such as the United Way and the private sector partners that donated, came together to make this new building a reality.

*Statements by Members*

I extend congratulations to the Dartmouth Work Activity Society and best wishes as it continues its great work in helping people find their way back to meaningful employment. I know it will keep up the great work.

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[*Translation*]

**REFRIGERATOR RECYCLING PROGRAM**

**Mr. Marcel Lussier (Brossard—La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, as of yesterday, the people of Quebec have access to the Recyc-Frigo Environnement program, implemented by Hydro-Québec. The program will help to collect and recycle 230,000 energy-consuming appliances, such as refrigerators and freezers, by 2010. This new program will make it possible to save about 180 million kilowatts-hours of energy over the next three years. It is a free collection service for this type of appliance, and owners will receive a \$60 incentive for each appliance recycled.

Participants must be Quebec residents. A form is available online and a specialized carrier will pick up the appliance at the resident's home. This is the kind of program that the Conservative government could have implemented with the budget surplus, as the Bloc Québécois suggested.

As a retired Hydro-Québec employee, and as a Bloc Québécois member, I applaud this wonderful initiative.

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[*English*]

**VICTORIA EMERGENCY RESPONDERS**

**Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in Victoria, the capital region's emergency telecommunications system, used by police, fire, military and ambulance, needs urgent upgrades and approvals from Industry Canada.

Signal failures have put at risk the lives of emergency responders as well as the lives of the public. Spotty coverage has resulted in a loss of communication at crucial times. Officers must work in pairs because of concerns CREST will fail.

Since 2001, local officials have struggled to get a commitment from Industry Canada for new radio frequencies. Industry Canada is aware of the problem but continues to delay.

When will the minister direct his officials to stop playing with the lives of people in our region and take immediate action to grant the needed frequencies?

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**CANADIAN BASEBALL HALL OF FAME**

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, baseball is a great Canadian pastime. For 25 years, the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in St. Marys, Ontario has been telling the story of great Canadian teams and Canadians in baseball, encouraging the game at all levels in Canada.

I believe that one of the best things we can do for our young people is help them become involved in minor sports. That is why our government has introduced the \$500 child fitness tax credit. The

Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame has been doing its part through its exceptional programs such as the Kids on Deck summer camps.

As 2008 is the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame's 25th regular season, I encourage everyone to head down to St. Marys, Ontario, especially on June 28, when Tony Fernandez, Billy Harris, Gladwyn Scott and Peter Widdrington will be inducted as the hall of fame's class of 2008.

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● (1405)

**CANADIAN COALITION AGAINST TERROR**

**Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, thanks to the efforts of the Canadian Coalition Against Terror, all parties in this House are ready to support legislation to permit attacking the financial resources of terrorist movements.

Bill S-225 would allow civil suits against states or groups sponsoring terrorist acts that result in the murder of Canadians abroad.

Whether it is the Air-India bombing, the twin towers attack or the massacre at the yeshiva in Jerusalem, such criminal activity targets the innocent, the unsuspecting and the uninvolved.

We can fight the Babbar Khalsa, al-Qaeda, Hezbollah and Hamas by going after the financial resources of their backers. FINTRAC last year reported 41 cases involving \$1.8 billion related to terrorist activity or other security threats to Canada.

Bill S-225 proposes financial remedies for families of victims. What is the Conservative government waiting for? It should bring the bill into this House and let us get it passed.

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**DEXTRE**

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on March 14, astronauts at the International Space Station began putting together Dextre, Canada's most advanced robot in space.

The spacewalks were a success, as astronauts installed Dextre's two hands. Dextre will be able to perform delicate precision tasks outside the station, allowing astronauts more time to focus on scientific experiments inside.

Canada is a world renowned leader in space robotics. Our robotic ingenuity and innovation are a source of tremendous pride and a true competitive advantage for our country. Canada's contributions to the International Space Station and our skill and expertise in space robotics have made us a leader in scientific and technological innovation.

We are in an age of discovery that has been made possible through Canadian robotic leadership and international collaboration.

[Translation]

#### QUEBEC CITY, SPRING OF 1918

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it was 90 years ago today, under a Conservative government, that soldiers from Ontario went to Quebec City and opened fire on a crowd that was protesting conscription. Seventy-five people were injured and four were killed.

After reviewing the events, the coroner's inquest concluded that "the individuals shot on this occasion were innocent victims in no way involved in this riot—and it is the government's duty to pay fair and reasonable compensation to the victims' families". This has yet to be done.

The Bloc Québécois asks that the federal government publicly apologize to the victims' families.

As a reminder, a commemorative work of art was erected at the very location where these tragic events took place in Quebec City's lower town. And on Sunday, at the invitation of the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Québec, we gathered around this monument to commemorate this sad anniversary.

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#### GERARD KENNEDY

**Mr. Luc Harvey (Louis-Hébert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the new Liberal critic for intergovernmental affairs, Mr. Kennedy, chosen by the party leader, is a perfect example of his party's centrist vision. He seems to have bought fully into the Liberal vision according to which Ottawa is always right, and he wants to impose his way of seeing things on the provinces, even in areas under provincial jurisdiction. For example, during the leadership race, Mr. Kennedy said that the federal government should be involved in education and setting provincial standards.

He said that the government should implement a national learning strategy. He also said that the Liberals should make their objectives known, that provincial governments should be viewed as partners, and that areas under provincial jurisdiction should be subject to standards, just like areas under federal jurisdiction.

Is the Liberal leader's new plan to give the federal government a say in areas that fall under provincial jurisdiction?

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[English]

#### IMMIGRATION

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government's changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act will set the system back to the 1950s. If these amendments pass, the new powers given to the minister will be very scary.

The Conservatives should be investing more money in hiring more immigration officers, not cutting the amount of people we let in. The backlog of immigration applications has gone up by 100,000 under the Conservative government.

All of this country's population and labour market growth will come from immigration over the next two decades. Immigration represents the key to Canada's future success.

#### Statements by Members

This kind of politics is harmful to our country.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

[Translation]

#### THE BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the secrecy has lasted long enough. Bloc members are privately admitting that they are experiencing an existential crisis and that it is difficult to remain in perpetual opposition. When will they finally admit it to the Quebec nation? They recognize that they are phantom members walking around always empty-handed, voiceless and unable to do anything after 18 years in Ottawa.

Support for sovereignty is stagnating and the referendum has been postponed indefinitely while Quebec is gaining strength in a unified Canada under the Conservatives who keep their promises.

I encourage the Bloc members to continue their own national conversation and to listen to the PQ supporters in Chaudière—Appalaches who hope that the Bloc will do itself in.

The truth is that more and more Quebecers are tired of electing armchair critics and want to vote for our Conservative government.

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[English]

#### CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, why is the government so grotesquely irresponsible when it comes to corporate social responsibility?

More than 1,000 mining companies are listed on Canadian stock exchanges, more than any other country. Canadian based companies conduct 40% of all mineral exploration in the world.

According to the UN, extractive companies are the most frequently cited in complaints of corporate human rights abuses in the developing world.

National round tables in 2006 involving industry leaders and development NGOs called for Canadian standards of corporate social responsibility, an independent ombudsperson to investigate claims of Canadian corporate abuses in developing countries, and withholding public support from the worst offenders.

In April 2007 the parliamentary secretary assured the foreign affairs committee the government would respond rapidly to these recommendations. In July the Prime Minister stated, "Implementation of these recommendations will place Canada among the most active G-8 countries in advancing corporate social responsibility".

A full year later, why is the government still deadly silent on corporate social responsibility?

*Oral Questions***ARCTIC WINTER GAMES**

**Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to report that Team Nunavut was awarded the prestigious Hodgson Sportsmanship Trophy at the 2008 Arctic Winter Games held in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories.

Named after one of the founders of the Arctic Winter Games, Commissioner Stu “Umingmak” Hodgson, the trophy is a stunning example of Inuit artwork. It is awarded to the team whose athletes best express the ideals of fair play and team spirit. Team members receive a distinctive pin in recognition of their accomplishment.

These last games were the 20th anniversary of the Arctic Winter Games, which were first held in 1970 in Yellowknife. They have since grown in size, but the circumpolar countries still celebrate the friendship, cooperation and sharing which are essential to survival in the north.

I want to congratulate Team Nunavut for this great accomplishment and to thank Sport Nunavut for the tremendous strides they have made with the sports programs and development in Nunavut, plus the athletes.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**QUEBECOR WORLD**

**Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it was with a heavy heart that we learned yesterday of the closing of Quebecor World, in Magog, in my riding of Brome—Missisquoi. The loss of these 320 well-paid jobs is another serious blow to a region already scarred by the closure of manufacturing firms.

The obsolescence of its equipment is the main reason for the closure. We have been urging the Conservatives to adopt programs that will improve and modernize Quebec plants. I can assure the men and women who have just lost their jobs that the Bloc Québécois will continue to fight for the establishment of an older worker adjustment program and therefore prevent them from being out on the street.

With these thousands of dollars of our tax money, this plant would have survived and supported another generation. This is a dark day for workers and I deplore the insensitive attitude of the Conservative government towards the manufacturing and forestry sectors.

\* \* \*

[English]

**SUDAN**

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today is the third anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1593, referring mass atrocities in Darfur to the International Criminal Court for investigation and prosecution.

One year ago the ICC issued arrest warrants for Sudanese government minister Ahmad Harun and Janjiweed militia leader Ali Kushayb for their planning and perpetration of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur.

● (1415)

[Translation]

Sudan refused to hand over the accused and promoted these two perpetrators of genocide to important posts, thus abysmally abdicating their humanitarian and international responsibilities.

[English]

The international community must put an end to this appalling culture of impunity through enhanced targeted sanctions, travel bans, asset seizures, arms embargoes, divestment, and the like. It must also pressure China to end its complicity in the vicious cycle that sustains the genocide: China buys Sudan's oil; Sudan buys China's arms; the Chinese arms are then used by the Sudanese government to massacre the people of Darfur.

[Translation]

The murders, displacement and destruction must cease and the Chinese complicity must be stopped.

\* \* \*

[English]

**IMMIGRATION**

**Mr. Wajid Khan (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hypocrisy of the Liberals when it comes to immigration is unbelievable. The fact is it is the Liberals who allowed the backlog to balloon from 50,000 to 800,000 applications. For 13 long years they did nothing.

The Liberals also opposed measures this government took to clean up their mess. They voted against \$1.3 billion in new settlement funding for newcomers to Canada. They voted against the foreign credentials referral office. They voted against our cutting the \$975 head tax on immigrants.

The deputy leader of the Liberal Party admitted the Liberals did not get it done on immigration and I have to agree with him.

The Conservative government wants families to be reunited faster. We want skilled workers to come here sooner.

The question is, what do the Liberals have against immigrants? With their track record we certainly will not take lessons on immigration from the Liberal Party.

**ORAL QUESTIONS**

[English]

**IMMIGRATION**

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me read—

**Some hon. members:** More, more.

**The Speaker:** Order, order. I hear members calling for more. We are going to get some. The Leader of the Opposition will start and we will have some order please.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Mr. Speaker, let me read from the 1988 Reform Party platform authored by the current Prime Minister. It says that immigration should not “radically or suddenly alter the ethnic makeup of Canada”.

Will the minister admit that the government's attempt to sneak in sweeping changes to our immigration system through the back door may look like an attempt to deliver promises made by the Reform Party 20 years ago?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party and this government are very proud of our commitment to a diverse Canada and to a strong immigration system that supports our Canadian economy. In fact, last year under this Conservative government, Canada welcomed more new Canadians than ever in anybody's lifetime in this House: 429,000.

That did not happen under the Liberal Party. That happened under the Conservative Party which understands what it takes to build a strong, diverse, economically powerful country.

[Translation]

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, rather than inflating figures by adding students and temporary workers, could the government tell us, if it does not think that the exorbitant powers that it wants to give itself have anything to do with the Reform ideology, why it is afraid to submit these radical changes to a full, comprehensive and open debate in this House by bringing forward independent legislation?

[English]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate that the Leader of the Opposition does not want to see students here in this country. It surprises me because he is a professor. I can certainly say that when it comes time to vote on this issue, I expect we are not going to see the Liberals stand up, because this past weekend the Liberal leader set out what the Liberal plan is. They will not take a stance on any issues. They will not stand on principle. The only time they are going to stand up is when they think they can get back to power.

He laid out their plan this weekend. It is the only Liberal plan they have ever had. The only reason they ever want to be in government is that they want to enjoy the power it gives them.

• (1420)

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, why does the government think that it should have the absolute right to pick and choose which immigrants are allowed to come to Canada? Why does the government want to introduce these radical changes through the back door instead of bringing forward independent legislation and allowing a full and open debate in the House of Commons as it should be doing?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there will of course be a debate starting on Thursday and I hope he will be here for that.

The reality is that this is a change in our system that is required because the Liberal government thought it was fine to tell Canadians

who were qualified they had to wait six years for their applications to be processed. They were happy to see a backlog of a million. That is not good for the Canadian economy. It is not fair to new Canadians who want to come here, to immigrants who want to add to our economy and make it strong.

We are making the changes that are necessary to have a strong Canadian economy fuelled by the skilled talent that we need from around the world coming to Canada for the hope and opportunity that it offers, especially under a Conservative government.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what the government says and what it does are two different things. It says it is trying to fix the immigration system, but what it does is it centralizes unprecedented power in the hands of a minister. It says it wants more immigrants, but what it does is it lets in 36,000 fewer permanent residents over the last two years.

Why is it fudging the numbers? Why has it been admitting fewer permanent residents? Why will the government not be straight with the Canadian people?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let us take a look at what some other more objective people think about the proposed amendments.

I would like to quote the Vancouver *Province*, which said:

What the Tories are proposing is to bring order to the current chaos, while allowing immigration patterns to match national priorities.

Surely that is to the benefit of all Canadians, immigrants included.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I did not get an answer to my question. Why were there 36,000 fewer permanent residents over the last two years?

That was a clear question and I am asking it again.

[English]

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let us listen to what was written in the *Winnipeg Free Press*:

What the Conservatives propose is common sense.... This is good policy.... Canadians, new and old, have been offered a clear choice: Conservative policy that will benefit Canada, or politics that will benefit Liberals.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

## THE QUEBEC NATION

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government has been boasting for more than a year about its recognition of the Quebec nation. But recognition of a nation needs to be more than symbolic. For example, 270,000 workers in Quebec are not protected by Bill 101, because they are under the jurisdiction of the Canada Labour Code. The language of work in Quebec is French, and this should be the case for all Quebec workers.

*Oral Questions*

What then is keeping the government from amending the Canada Labour Code so that Quebec workers, such as those in banks and telecommunications, which come under federal jurisdiction, can work entirely in French? That is what recognition of a nation is all about.

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois has been here in the House of Commons for 17 years now, if not 18, and they turn up with this debate this year. We wish to respect provincial areas of jurisdiction, yet here we have the Bloc Québécois wishing to bring a provincial law into an area of federal jurisdiction. The members of the Bloc want to trample over our areas of jurisdiction.

The Canada Labour Code, like the provincial labour codes, does not deal with language. The Canada Labour Code deals with labour relations, occupational health and safety, and labour standards, but not with language.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member has just said is totally wrong. The Canada Labour Code stipulates that the minimum wage is determined by each province. If that can be done for the minimum wage, it should be possible for language of work. This needs just an amendment to the code, not even a change to the constitution.

Let him tell the truth. He wants to travel around Quebec saying that he has recognized the nation, while travelling around the rest of Canada saying that this means nothing and stating his plan to continue to try to impose bilingualism on Quebec. That is what he wants.

• (1425)

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the ministers of this government and the Quebec MPs have worked to ensure that the Quebec nation is recognized within a united Canada. That is precisely what this party's Quebec members did for Quebec.

What is more, it is a federal responsibility to provide services in both official languages in Quebec. As for the minimum wage, which is covered by Canada Labour Code standards, the provinces did indeed ask us to respect their jurisdictions and we apply minimum wages according to the level set by the province.

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**MULTICULTURALISM**

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, if recognizing the Quebec nation does nothing for Quebecers, it is pointless. It is exactly the same for Canada's multiculturalism policy. It is not consistent with the Quebec model of integration. "That notion hardly seems compatible with Quebec's reality." That was the opinion of a man whom the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities very much admired, I would think. Yes, it was Robert Bourassa who wrote those words to Pierre Elliott Trudeau in 1971, more than 35 years ago.

Will the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities repudiate Robert Bourassa and refuse to ensure that Quebec is exempted from the Multiculturalism Act?

**Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, clearly, as everyone knows from media reports over the weekend, the Bloc Québécois is going through an existential crisis. After conversations about nationhood, here they are questioning their *raison d'être* here in Ottawa. Really. That is how new propositions arise.

As Quebecers, we will continue to promote the Quebec nation within Canada.

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, if the minister had been reading the newspapers lately, she would not be proud of the portrait they are painting of her.

The federal government's policy on multiculturalism is an obstacle to the harmonious integration of newcomers to the Quebec nation, where the model is based on shared values and a common language, French.

Now that it has recognized the Quebec nation, will the government show consistency and exclude Quebec from the Multiculturalism Act, thereby allowing Quebec to fully develop its own model for the integration of newcomers?

**Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, indeed, as a minister from the Quebec City region, I have read the results of polls printed in the newspapers, polls that project a positive image of the Conservatives in the region.

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**CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has been at her job long enough to know the problems in her department. Because of decades of cutbacks to offices abroad, we have thousands of applications that sit untouched, and there are no resources in the budget to fix this. Her solution? Make hasty changes by hiding a bad law in a bad budget.

Why do something that will only lead to arbitrary decisions about immigrants?

[English]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on the contrary. In this budget and in the previous budget of 2007 we have provided additional funding to assist in addressing the very serious immigration backlog. We inherited close to a million from a backlog that was almost non-existent when the Liberals became government. Therefore, we have been investing.

The changes we are proposing are changes that are going to allow us to even better serve the people seeking to come to this country and allow them to make big contributions to the Canadian economy. People come to our country as a place of freedom, of hope, of opportunity where they can build strong futures and lives for their families, and that helps all Canadians.

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the law proposed by the government will break the hope of so many families that have come here because it is fundamentally arbitrary. When these families come here, they usually send mom or dad ahead. They find an apartment, they get a job, they get a bank account and then they turn around and try to reunite their family.

This law will prevent thousands of families from being reunited because the government will have arbitrary power. It will simply say, "You're here now, but it turns out your family is from the wrong country. You've got a disabled kid. We don't like your family. You can't be reunited".

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the NDP likes to pretend it is a great fan of immigrants. In reality, the record shows otherwise.

Every time we have made a change to make it easier for people to come to this country, to contribute to our economy and enjoy the freedom, hope and opportunity that we have, whether it is cutting the tax that immigrants had to pay under the Liberals, whether it is adding \$1.3 billion for new settlement funding, whether it is setting up a foreign credentials reference office, all those things we have been doing and the additional resources to cut the backlog, the NDP votes against every one. Those members talk the words, but they do not vote consistent with those values. We do.

\* \* \*

• (1430)

[Translation]

#### AFGHANISTAN

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Yesterday, the minister said that the government could wait until next year for our NATO allies to commit additional troops for our mission in Kandahar.

Will the government set a specific date by which the conditions must be met so that Canada continues its mission in Afghanistan?

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. new colleague for his question.

It is clear in the Manley report that we have until February 2009 to have an additional 1,000 soldiers on the ground, in theatres in Afghanistan, to help us have a mission that can achieve its objectives.

As I have said recently, I am confident and optimistic that we will be able to achieve that objective. The Minister of National Defence and the Prime Minister have worked very hard to make sure we have the troops.

[English]

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the House worked very cooperatively to get to a resolution that could be passed by a majority of the House. We have a non-partisan mission, but we do not have a non-partisan approach to solving this problem.

Why can the minister not produce for us, now, a clear indication of the timetable that will be followed and a transparent sense of the

accountability toward the House that will be followed, so the conditions of this mission and the conditions of the resolution can be met by the government?

[Translation]

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our intention is to abide by the resolution adopted by this House. We are very happy to have the support of the opposition for our mission in Afghanistan. The resolution calls on the government to have clear objectives and to report regularly to the House. We will report regularly to the House about the objectives and the status of our mission in Afghanistan.

[English]

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a key recommendation adopted by Parliament on the mission in Afghanistan was for the government to increase transparency to all Canadians. The House passed a motion requiring that transparency.

The Prime Minister says that this is a Canadian mission and a Canadian motion. Why is he leading a partisan delegation to Bucharest?

[Translation]

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are very proud to be in Bucharest with all our allies to talk about Afghanistan and make sure it remains a priority for NATO. I am optimistic that by the end of this meeting, we will have achieved what we set out to do. We are there with a strong mandate that the opposition and Parliament have given us, and we will respect that mandate.

[English]

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the resolution passed by the House was clear. It is incumbent on the government to provide Canadians with increased accountability and transparency about our mission in Afghanistan. This is not a partisan mission; this is a Canadian mission.

Why are Conservative viewpoints only welcome in Bucharest?

[Translation]

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yes, our mission in Afghanistan is a Canadian mission, thanks to the support of the opposition, and I am very happy about that. This mission is taking place under the leadership of the Prime Minister. We are currently in Bucharest to make sure this mission can continue until 2011, according to the conditions set out in the resolution of the House.

*Oral Questions***TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

**Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, a few years ago, the Government of Quebec declared, and I quote, “Quebec cannot let others control programming for electronic media within its borders...To that end, Quebec must have full jurisdiction and be able to deal with a single regulatory body.”

Will the Minister of Canadian Heritage, a member of the government that recognizes the nation of Quebec, respect the will of Quebec?

• (1435)

**Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, most definitely, the special Bloc caucus before Easter brought new issues to the table. As is customary, the federal government will exercise its authority in federal jurisdictions.

**Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the minister that this statement was made by the Minister of Transport when he was the Liberal Minister of Communications in Quebec. If this was true when the Minister of Transportation was a member of the National Assembly, it is even more so with the development of new technologies and it is even more important to act now.

Does this not prove that the government refuses to move from words to deeds in the case of the nation of Quebec?

**Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, given that we are going back in time to the early 1990s, allow me to remind the member that the Bloc said it would only be here for one term. We are still waiting for it to decide to leave.

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**SEAL HUNTERS**

**Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in light of new, very concerning statements, such as the ones made by Wayne Dickson, the captain who rescued the two survivors, there needs to be a real public inquiry. According to him, he corroborates the statements of other witnesses, including Mr. Bourque, the son of the captain of *L'Acadien II* who died in the accident, the Canadian Coast Guard was negligent when it was towing the boat.

Will the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans order that a real public inquiry be held, as the people of the Magdalen Islands are calling for?

[English]

**Hon. Loyola Hearn (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure the member, as do all of us here, feels for the families and communities involved. Those of us who come from fishing communities in particular know the effect of something like this on the whole community and the whole area.

I assure the member that all the facts will come out. Three studies have been initiated, supported by the Government of Quebec and by the local area. The truth of whatever happened will come out and all the bits and pieces we hear will be put together to ensure this puzzle is completely solved for the families, as it should.

[Translation]

**Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Mr. Dickson, who was following *L'Acadien II* and the icebreaker, said that he noticed that some of the Canadian Coast Guard's actions were unusual. He also tried to contact the crew of the icebreaker when a piece of ice hampered the towing efforts, but no one responded to the call. Mr. Dickson believes that the drowning of four Magdalen Islands residents could have been avoided.

How can anyone argue against a public inquiry? Will the minister call for a real public inquiry?

[English]

**Hon. Loyola Hearn (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, all of us have heard the statements that have been made. We are going to hear many of those. There are many views that will be expressed. That is why we have put a mechanism in place to ensure that all the information is collected, and proper decisions will be made at that time.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**ETHICS**

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have yet to answer a simple question about the Cadman affair. What was the Prime Minister referring to when he spoke about an offer made to Mr. Cadman pertaining to financial considerations in the event of an election?

[English]

**Mr. James Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I believe I have answered this question more than once, but way less than 5,000 times, but I will go ahead anyway.

[Translation]

The only offer made to Mr. Cadman was the one discussed several times in this House, which is also the only offer that Mr. Cadman himself spoke about, that is to rejoin our party, to run as a Conservative candidate and to be re-elected as a Conservative member.

[English]

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary is right. He has answered it with several different stories. First, there was no offer, then no offer of a loan, then no offer to rejoin caucus, then no offer for a nomination, then no offer for financial assistance, then no offer became a three part offer.

The problem is that tape wherein the Prime Minister talks about replacing financial considerations. Conservatives admit it was his voice, that those are his words. Why will he not simply explain what he had in mind when he talked about financial considerations?

*Oral Questions*

●(1440)

**Mr. James Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, people in glass houses are throwing stones in question period. Let us look at what we have.

The Liberals have been changing their story on this. First, the Liberals said that there was a meeting on May 17; they were wrong. The Liberals said that Chuck Cadman was not going to run again; they were wrong. The Liberals said that we offered Chuck Cadman a \$1 million life insurance policy; they were wrong. The Liberals asserted that somehow I was personally involved in organizing a meeting; they were wrong.

We have been clear, consistent and honest with the facts. It has been very easy. All we have done is taken the words of Chuck Cadman and amplified them in the House of Commons. Chuck Cadman said that there was no financial offer. He spoke the truth. The Liberals should accept it.

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**ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE**

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is clear from public evidence that the RCMP's actions in the income trust matter had an impact on the 2006 election.

The fact is the RCMP had no established guidelines for public communications regarding criminal investigations. The complaints commissioner Kennedy recommends that such guidelines be established.

Could the public safety minister tell the House what steps he will take to ensure that the RCMP establishes appropriate guidelines on such matters?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Just to review the file, Mr. Speaker, when the Liberals were in government, there was an announcement made by the former finance minister about certain dividends going back to corporations.

Surprisingly, there was a spike in the price of shares and share volumes just before that and it was a member of the NDP who asked the RCMP to look into this.

The RCMP did look into it and Mr. Kennedy has now observed in his report that there was no political involvement by the RCMP. He suggested recommendations and those recommendations are being put in place.

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this matter is extremely urgent. During an election, if an RCMP investigation were re-opened into Brian Mulroney's financial transactions, would the government care how the announcement was handled?

During an election, if the RCMP were to investigate the tape on which the Prime Minister described an offer to Chuck Cadman, would the government care how the announcement was handled?

During an election, if charges were laid against the environment minister for his role in interfering in the Ottawa mayoralty race,

would the government really not care how the announcement was handled?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, instead of some exasperated rhetoric, maybe we should just ask some other questions. Does the member recall, since he wants to review the election, that during that election the public was absolutely fed up with the former Liberal government that was living under the worst levels of corruption seen at the federal political level?

We also had a very clear program of reducing taxes and programs for families, and paying down debt. Frankly, the public responded to all of that. Now, the recommendations which Mr. Kennedy is asking for are being put in place right away, so we are taking action.

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**SPACE INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadian astronauts inspire Canadian youth to reach for their dreams and become our next generation of space explorers. Canadians are proud and inspired when they see our astronauts in space participating in the creation of the world's most unique science laboratory, the international space station.

With each flight of the space shuttle and launch of the Soyuz spacecraft, the world comes even closer to completing this spectacular project.

Can the Minister of Industry tell us what the government is doing to ensure Canada remains a leader in the space industry?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday I announced that the Canadian Space Agency will initiate a national astronaut recruitment campaign. Highly educated, skilled, experienced and talented young Canadians will be able to determine whether they have the right stuff. Those successful candidates will see their names alongside our Canadian space heroes: Julie Payette, Dave Williams and Bob Thirsk.

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

**Hon. Jim Prentice:** I judge from the clamour on the other side of the House that there are Liberals who would be interested in applying. It would seem to me that spending time in outer space certainly would not affect their voting record here on earth.

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**AFGHANISTAN**

**Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in response to a question from the leader of the NDP on the extension of the war in Afghanistan, the Prime Minister said, "I have always been clear that if our conditions are not met, we will withdraw".

Reports indicate that French President Sarkozy will not deploy 1,000 troops to Kandahar. Will the government make it clear that, without an agreement from NATO member nations at the summit, Canada will withdraw from Kandahar as the Prime Minister said in this House yesterday?

*Oral Questions*

●(1445)

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister made it very clear in the House yesterday when he answered a similar question. In fact, we are encouraged by the confidence our allies have shown in supporting our objectives in the mission in Afghanistan. We continue to talk to our allies at all levels: military, civilian and political. We expect to announce some progress on this by the end of the NATO summit.

Whether it will be the final announcement or not, I do not know, but this is in accordance with the mission in Afghanistan as laid out. It is in accordance with the Manley report. It is in accordance with the motion passed by this House.

We are going to get the job done, as usual.

**Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's position yesterday was clear until the Minister of National Defence suggested that a deal was not necessary by the end of the summit. Now, we have the Minister of Foreign Affairs suggesting that we have 11 more months to find the 1,000 soldiers.

Will the government be straight? Will it be straight with the Canadian people, with Parliament, with our brave troops, and with their families? Which is it: Does this decision for additional troops need to be made before the end of the NATO summit in Bucharest, or is there now a new deadline?

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question and take this moment to wish her a happy birthday, at the risk of adding good news.

We have been straight with Canadians all along. That is why we commissioned the Manley study to come up with some guidance to show the way ahead. That is what we are following.

The Prime Minister is in Bucharest right now, along with the Minister of National Defence. The Minister of Foreign Affairs will be joining them shortly and we are going to get the job done. We are in close contact with our allies all the time. We are united on this and we are going to get the job done.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]**SEAL HUNTERS**

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the human tragedy in the Magdalen Islands deserves some compassion; it is a must. The families affected by the tragedy deserve to have the federal government's full support.

Yesterday, the minister indicated that he would cover the cost of bringing the fishers' bodies back home. Will he do the right thing today, now, and work with his department to bring the fishers' bodies back to the Magdalen Islands?

[*English*]

**Hon. Loyola Hearn (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, we will make sure the bodies are returned at no cost to the families.

I wish to notify him and the House that we will be doing this immediately with the help of our friends from the Department of National Defence. The bodies will be brought back by chopper as quickly as possible to the Magdalen Islands.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the people affected by this tragedy are entitled to get answers to their questions. The reality is clear: a crew member is missing and his family is waiting.

Will the minister see to it today that a Coast Guard representative goes to the Magdalen Islands to answer the questions of this family and the other Magdalen Islands families in their own language? Will the minister go there himself to meet with the families affected by this tragedy?

[*English*]

**Hon. Loyola Hearn (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again, let me inform the member that we have already sent people to the island. They are already there representing the Coast Guard and the Department of Transport. We also have other officials there, and when we get away from the hype, the sadness and the concern around this, I will be delighted myself at any time to talk to anybody who will find themselves in this situation.

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**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs says she is back on the Brenda Martin case. I am sure this news will only add to the fears Ms. Martin has for ever gaining her freedom. I want to recognize the other Secretary of State for Multiculturalism for his cameo appearance on this ongoing failure by the government to stand up for a Canadian citizen.

Now that the minister is back, will she find out who within her department and her party leaked personal and private information about Ms. Martin to the media, or will she be using it herself to smear a Canadian who has suffered enough injustice and bungling by the government?

●(1450)

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am quite pleased to work with the secretary of state. I am quite pleased to work with my cabinet colleagues. I would like to say that we regret that personal information about Ms. Martin's case was made public, in violation of the Privacy Act.

My officials are looking into where the leak might have originated from. We will keep the House abreast of this investigation.

[*English*]

**Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we also hope the Privacy Commissioner will now be able to determine why Brenda's rights were not only violated in Mexico, they were violated right here in Canada.

[Translation]

Mohamed Kohail is also well aware of this government's incompetence. The Minister of Public Safety is incapable of meeting with the Saudi representatives in charge of this case and when Mr. Kohail's lawyer was being threatened and kicked out of the courtroom, the Conservatives did nothing.

Will any of the ministers responsible for foreign affairs officially protest the denial of fundamental legal rights of another Canadian citizen abroad?

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is what we have done and what we are doing. As the hon. member knows, we have an important policy that promotes human rights.

In consular cases, that is what we do. I personally have done so and so have a number of other ministers. We raise these cases when that needs to be done in order to defend Canadians abroad.

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#### FOOD SAFETY

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's failure to monitor imported products is resulting in a lower level of compliance for foodstuffs, thereby threatening food safety for consumers in Quebec and Canada.

Will the minister implement food safety measures, as recommended by Michel Labrosse, the federal government's national import operations manager?

[English]

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have done exactly that, building on the announcement made by the Prime Minister just before Christmas. Working with my colleague from health, we are moving forward with exactly those recommendations.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Quebec and a number of experts have criticized the lack of monitoring of imported foodstuffs. While this endangers consumers, it is also a problem for producers, because imported products do not comply with the same standards as domestic products, according to Christian Lacasse, president of the UPA.

Can the minister explain why it is that chemicals prohibited here are used on foreign foodstuffs and that those chemicals and foodstuffs can be found on our supermarket shelves?

When will the government demand reciprocity in terms of standards as a prerequisite for import?

[English]

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, as he sits on the agriculture committee, there have been some hearings on this and the committee is planning on doing some more in the near future.

#### Oral Questions

But having said that, we have actually started to move ahead with the changes that will be required to the product of Canada label, made in Canada label, to give consumers a much more educated viewpoint of what is in that container.

They need to know exactly where those products came from. Even though they are packaged in this country, they need to know the genesis of those particular products. It is also going to help safeguard and make sure that Canadians know that it may cost them a little bit more for that better product in the container, but it is Canadian right through to the core, and that is what they are happy to pay for.

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#### HOUSING

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the last time that provincial and territorial housing ministers got together in this country, the federal minister decided not to show up. Tomorrow they will try again to meet and to discuss the future of the federal affordable housing program set to expire in March 2009.

Will the minister leave the provinces and the municipalities to fend for themselves or will he finally show some leadership and take some action to ensure long term funding to end the crisis of affordable housing and homelessness in our country?

**Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend for the question and welcome her back from wherever.

This government is spending more money on housing for vulnerable Canadians than any government in history. The last thing we want to do is go back to the Liberal way and actually reduce the amount of money that is going to provinces and individuals. We will not do that.

This government is standing up for vulnerable Canadians from coast to coast and we will continue to do that in the future.

\* \* \*

• (1455)

#### ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Mr. Fabian Manning (Avalon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, aboriginal people throughout Canada have been fighting for years for a better quality of life, progress on land claims and other key important issues, not only for them but for future generations.

I know this government has only been in office a little over two years but it has made some great strides in achieving these goals, for instance, cutting in half the number of high risk water systems which we inherited from 13 years of Liberal neglect.

Therefore, I would like to ask the Minister of Indian Affairs if he could highlight what other progress is being made in respect to aboriginal people and the issues that matter most to them.

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to talk about the remarkable progress we have made since coming into office.

### Oral Questions

Last fall, for example, the Prime Minister announced Indian status for Newfoundland Mi'kmaq for the very first time. In a vote last weekend the agreement received overwhelming support by the band, over 90% support.

On Friday, the Prime Minister was in Kuujuaq to hail the enactment of the Nunavut Inuit land claim agreement, the last of the Inuit land claim agreements. We also settled over 50 specific claims in the last year.

The difference is that over there they say the number one purpose of the Liberal Party is to gain power. We say our number one purpose is to serve Canadians, and aboriginals are well served.

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### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Conservative MPs on the environment committee simply do not want to work. They prefer filibusters and sabotage.

The Conservatives are currently holding the only comprehensive post-Kyoto legislation hostage. Bill C-377 would finally put Canada back on track in the fight against dangerous climate change.

Will the environment minister tell his MPs to stop the delay and deny tactics? Why is there so little energy to tackle climate change and why is there so much energy for the monkey wrench gang over there?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, committees of the House act on their own accord. My role as Minister of the Environment is to clean up the legacy of inaction left to us by the previous government.

We are working hard with a plan to reduce in absolute terms our greenhouse gases by 20%. That is something that has never happened in this country. We have only seen greenhouse gases go up. Even the deputy leader of the Liberal Party told his leader that he did not get the job done. We are acting and we are getting the job done.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is only fair that if Canadian families are willing to do their share, so, too, should the big polluters and the government.

However, after 20 years of promises to get the job done, what do we see? The Liberals did not do it. The Conservatives will not do it. The climate change accountability act will do it.

No more delays and no more excuses from Minister Mugabe over there. It is time to let Parliament do its work.

Will the environment minister stop the scorched earth environmental policy and support a bill that would finally get the job done?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will not dignify the NDP's question with a response.

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### GOVERNMENT FLYERS

**Hon. Garth Turner (Halton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the member for Burlington delivered 29,000 copies of a flyer aimed at seniors to a postal substation in my riding for distribution.

The maximum number of copies that the House of Commons allows is just over 5,000. Thus, the member for Burlington has broken the rules with an illegal mailing that he expects taxpayers to pay for.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Why is he instructing his caucus to abuse the rules and then force taxpayers to foot the bill for this garbage?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, all the materials that are being sent out by members on this side are done fully in accordance with the rules of this House of Commons and approved by Parliament. Any suggestion to the opposite is incorrect.

I can understand why the member for Halton calls it an attack ad and does not like it. It is because it says, "You deserve to keep more of your money; pension income splitting; 2% GST cut; age credit increase \$1,000; increased guaranteed income supplement benefits great for seniors". He calls it an attack ad because in Halton it is. Those were all the things he campaigned on in the last election and which he has voted against ever since he got here.

\* \* \*

● (1500)

### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my riding is home to the St. Clair River. It is of great benefit to the local economies in the region and nearly 170,000 citizens rely on the river for drinking water.

For many years there have been few, if any, cleanup dollars from senior levels of government. Funding for serious environmental issue was very hard to come by.

Could the Minister of the Environment please tell the House how the government is supporting the people in my riding in helping to clean up the St. Clair River?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, at the outset I should congratulate the member for Sarnia—Lambton who has worked hard on water quality issues in the Great Lakes and has delivered real results for the St. Clair River.

The government is investing some \$3.3 million to help clean up the contaminated sediment on St. Clair River.

Mayor Bradley from Sarnia said, “We've had more action from this federal government in the past year than we had in the previous 15”, and that is because of the hard work by the member for Sarnia—Lambton.

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[Translation]

#### TIBET

**Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, the whole world is distraught over the violence in Tibet. In order to resolve this crisis, the Dalai Lama's call for dialogue must be unanimously encouraged by the international community, and heard by China. The Conservative government must exert real pressure so that talks can begin immediately.

Apart from the empty rhetoric coming from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, what concrete steps will the Canadian government take to help resolve the crisis in Tibet, without compromise?

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the situation in Tibet is of great concern to us, which is why we are asking for talks between Chinese and Tibetan authorities—in order to resolve the situation. We believe that Tibetans have the right to freedom of association and freedom of expression. Those are universal values, and we hope that they can be peacefully practised in Tibet.

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[English]

#### PRESENCE IN GALLERY

**The Speaker:** I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of Mr. Alex Ferguson, Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament.

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

[Translation]

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Bourassa on a point of order.

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#### POINT OF ORDER

##### ORAL QUESTIONS

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there are many debates here in the House, but certain words are unacceptable. Although my colleague, the Minister of the Environment, and I may have heated debates at times, I find it absolutely unacceptable that the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley refer to him as “Minister Mugabe”. I ask that the member rise and apologize. Canada is a democracy, and we respect one another here.

[English]

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my comments and apologize to the minister.

#### Business of Supply

[Translation]

#### PRIVILEGE

##### ORAL QUESTIONS

**Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on March 13, 2008, the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst rose on a question of privilege regarding the invitation I received to appear before the Standing Committee on Official Languages. I responded as follows and I quote:

Appearing before the committee is a ministerial responsibility. Since being appointed, I have had the privilege of appearing before the committee on several occasions, most recently on December 6, 2007. I will be pleased to appear before the committee to discuss the next phase of the action plan as soon as I have finished working on it.

Thus, it was an unfortunate misunderstanding and I will indeed be pleased to appear before the committee when the action plan is presented.

● (1505)

**The Speaker:** I thank the hon. member and, as I indicated earlier, I will consider all the statements made on the matter before reaching my decision.

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#### GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

#### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—COMPLIANCE WITH THE CHARTER OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE REGARDING ENTERPRISES UNDER FEDERAL JURISDICTION LOCATED IN QUEBEC

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**The Speaker:** Before the oral question period, the hon. member for Hochelaga had the floor. He has a little more than 16 minutes left for his remarks.

The hon. member for Hochelaga.

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the permission of the House to split my time with the hon. member for Drummond. I therefore understand that I have five minutes left and that my colleague will have 10 minutes.

Before question period, I was saying how proud I was to belong to a political party that had introduced a motion of national recognition—when you really think about it—and how much I believe, with all due respect to the other political parties, that no one else in this House could have introduced such a motion.

We appreciate the support of our NDP colleagues, but we saw before question period the extent to which the government and the Liberals had joined forces to fight obstinately side by side. When it comes to recognizing the weight of Quebec's language rights, the two centralizing parties stand shoulder to shoulder, incapable of giving content or substance to the recognition of the Quebec nation.

*Business of Supply*

I want to make three points. First, what the Bloc is seeking is recognition for Bill 101. Camille Laurin said it was an act of national redress. For a very long time in the history of Quebec, it was considered acceptable that people who came to Quebec as immigrants learned English before learning French. It was, of course, impossible to accept that situation. Demographically speaking, the struggle for the survival of the French fact and the influence of anglophones in Quebec and Canada can never be considered in the same terms.

The Bloc Québécois motion also asks whether it is true that we are a nation, whether it is true that we have a history, whether it is true that we have a legal system, whether it is true that we occupy the land in our own way, whether it is true that we have a cultural life and whether it is true that we have different traditions from those of English Canada. We do not claim that they are superior; we claim that they are different. We are seeking recognition of the principal vehicle for the expression of this cultural reality, the Charter of the French Language, that is, our own vernacular, which is French.

Two members of the Bloc Québécois tabled bills. One member proposed an amendment to the Official Languages Act to recognize the French language as Quebec's only official language. When a member of the House of Commons rises to say that French is Quebec's only official language, his statement carries the weight of historical fact, because all governments in the National Assembly have recognized that. This is not a partisan issue.

The French fact also raises a distinction with respect to strategies for integration. I was not just talking through my hat when I said that this is a non-partisan issue.

Monique Gagnon-Tremblay, the minister responsible for immigration under Robert Bourassa's government in the 1990s, who is still the member for Saint-François in the National Assembly, suggested that immigrants be party to a "moral contract". The moral contract comprised five elements. It recognized that French was the official language, the language of the common public culture. Things like that prove that historically, Quebec never supported ethnic nationalism, and that is even truer today. Anyone who knows or wants to learn French and who lives in Quebec is a Quebecker.

Gérald Godin, poet, former minister of cultural communities and member for Mercier, who defeated Robert Bourassa in 1976, quite rightly said that there are 100 ways to be a Quebecker.

● (1510)

But the 100 ways of being a Quebecker have to converge in one and the same reality, which is knowledge, learning and promotion of French.

In 1990, Ms. Gagnon-Tremblay, who is not a sovereigntist, who is not a separatist, proposed a moral integration contract in response to multiculturalism. There were a number of elements, among them knowledge of French and the fact that Quebec is a secular society. As far as the operation of institutions is concerned, Quebec is a secular society, which does not mean that people are not entitled to their religious life or to deep faith. That is not the issue.

We asked for a third element, namely recognition of the democratic culture that comes about by participating in Quebec's democratic institutions. It may be remembered that Quebec is one of

the oldest democracies in North America, if not the oldest. That is certainly true when it comes to the parliamentary system, which came about with the Constitution Act of 1791 and where the first Speaker of the National Assembly was, if I am not mistaken, Mr. Panet. I know that there are history teachers in this place, and I would hate to be wrong.

So, we have knowledge of French, development of democratic institutions, acceptance of the fact that Quebec is a secular society and another element in that moral integration contract for immigrants, an extremely important value that we had occasion to recall during the proceedings of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, namely that Quebec is a society which puts men and women on an equal footing. We do not accept the view that women are inferior or men are superior.

We ask immigrants to believe in the equality of men and women. After Pierre Elliott Trudeau, it was the Conservatives under Brian Mulroney—I do not know if I evoke good or bad memories in this House when I utter his name—who in 1988 passed the Multiculturalism Act.

The message of multiculturalism is that you can retain your original cultural without taking part in the common public culture of your host society. All governments, Robert Bourassa, Jacques Parizeau and the others promoted interculturalism. That is what the Bloc québécois wants, and the Quebec Conservative caucus votes for this motion out of national pride.

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague on his speech. This morning, I heard an English-speaking Liberal colleague complaining that we were not protecting her rights in Quebec. If memory serves, her party offered Montreal's McGill University \$10 million to teach Francophone nurses in English so that they could serve Quebec anglophones.

We recognize the needs of the anglophone community in Quebec, and we give proper recognition to immigrants, too, by endeavouring to integrate them and refraining from practising multiculturalism.

I would like to ask my colleague to what extent Quebeckers are able to accommodate both the anglophone community and immigrants coming to Quebec.

● (1515)

**Mr. Réal Ménard:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I, too, was somewhat surprised by the statement from the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, a parliamentarian whom I respect. She is a very forward-thinking woman who has waged very courageous battles in the past, but I think that she was wrong in her assessment of the dynamics between francophones and anglophones.

*Business of Supply*

Now is the time to bring this up, because the television series recounting the career of René Lévesque has been running on Radio-Canada for the past two weeks. It is important to know that on the very day the Parti québécois was created, René Lévesque battled within that emerging movement to ensure historical recognition, long-lasting recognition, of what he called Quebec's founding minority, and that tradition continued with Jacques Parizeau. Remember that in the 1995 draft legislation, which was mailed to every household in Quebec, we recognized the historical rights of the anglophone community.

To the MacDonalds, the Browns and the Smiths who worked alongside francophones to build Quebec, we say that they have an historical place from kindergarten to university, that in every aspect of public life, this is their home and it would be impossible to imagine Quebec without them. That was the message conveyed by René Lévesque and Jacques Parizeau, and that is the message conveyed by Pauline Marois and the sovereigntist movement. That is the reason why there is civil rest in Quebec.

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague for his fine presentation. Not so long ago — and I think it is still the case now — Quebec's anglophone minority was considered to be the best-treated minority in all of Canada.

I would like to ask my colleague why it can be said today that we have integrated that minority better than any other province has integrated francophone minorities outside Quebec.

**Mr. Réal Ménard:** Mr. Speaker, we have not integrated that minority. That minority is a founding minority that all Quebecers recognize for its contributions throughout the province's history.

The difference is that as far back as 1977, if I am not mistaken, René Lévesque proposed a reciprocity agreement at the St. Andrews conference. During the 1995 referendum, Lucien Bouchard proposed a common institution that would give English Canada and Quebec mutual oversight over their respective minorities—anglophones in Quebec and francophones in the rest of Canada.

However, it is clear that the imbalance is so great as to defy comparison. Unfortunately, some parts of Canada would have suffered if not for the court challenges program that the Conservatives decided to eliminate. Shame on the Conservatives for abolishing the court challenges program, considering all of the anglophone and francophone minorities who have had to go to court to fight for their rights.

That is not how things work in Quebec because the National Assembly and the province's governments have shouldered their responsibilities.

**Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today, the Bloc Québécois presented a motion that reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of the House, following the recognition of the Quebec nation by this House, the government should move from words to deeds and propose measures to solidify that recognition, including compliance with the language of labour relations of Quebec's Charter of the French language regarding [workers of] enterprises under federal jurisdiction located in Quebec.

When the Conservative government made the decision to formally recognize the Quebec nation, it led the House of Commons to readily

recognize that nation's attributes, including its language, culture and integration model.

If the federal government would truly recognize the Quebec nation, and not just in words, it would respect the language of that nation and it would support Bill C-482, which was presented by the Bloc Québécois to amend the Canada Labour Code, and which is currently going through the parliamentary process.

According to the most recent data released by the Office québécois de la langue française on the language used in the workplace, one quarter of the population on the island of Montreal works in English. Among anglophones, it is three quarters of the labour force.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages keeps refusing to answer a very simple question: When will she finally recognize that French is being threatened in Quebec and ensure that her government stops contributing to this decline?

It is clear that the Conservative government used the recognition of the Quebec nation to try to win Quebecers' confidence. Once that recognition was a done deed, that was good enough for the government, and that recognition did not change anything.

However, the government can and must act. It can do so either by supporting Bill C-482, or by supporting our motion. In the first instance, it would have to comply with Bill 101 when implementing the Canada Labour Code in Quebec, in order to improve the situation regarding the language of work in Quebec. In the second instance, it would have to propose measures to give concrete expression to this recognition.

In reply to each of the Bloc Québécois' questions, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages indicated that her government promotes bilingualism in Canada and not just French in Quebec. In reality, she encourages bilingualism in Quebec and thus weakens the French language. This explanation alone supports the fact that only the Bloc Québécois defends Quebec's values and interests in Ottawa.

We are asking that the federal government recognize and respect the Charter of the French Language in Quebec primarily with respect to the language of work in businesses that fall under federal jurisdiction, that it exempt Quebec from its multiculturalism policy and that it delegate to Quebec responsibility for regulating broadcasting and telecommunications.

Anyone who looks at the mandate of the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages will read the following:

[It] works to protect language rights by overseeing the application of the Official Languages Act by the federal government. It also promotes Canada's official languages and respect for linguistic duality, which is a fundamental part of our national identity.

There are two important aspects: protecting language rights and promoting the official languages.

*Business of Supply*

According to data from the last census released in December 2007, it seems that the French language has lost ground throughout Canada, including Quebec, even though a greater number of immigrants than before speak French at home. What is the government doing about this? Even though the number of people with French as their mother tongue rose between 2001 and 2006, their relative weight declined and these individuals only represent 22.1% of the population, Statistics Canada revealed.

• (1520)

The same is true for the number of francophones, which, between 2001 and 2006, decreased by 5,000. With regard to the population that uses French most often at home, their numbers decreased by 8,000.

Given those statistics, the government must indicate how it plans to fulfill its responsibility to ensure the maintenance and development of official language minority communities. How can the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages fulfill its mission, which includes taking all necessary steps to achieve the three main objectives of the Official Languages Act, including the equality of French and English in Canadian society?

Anyone who visits the commissioner's website can read this and might even be surprised to learn that the current Official Languages Act:

- guarantees services in English and in French where required by the Act;
- guarantees federal employees the right to work in the official language of their choice in certain regions;
- enhances the vitality of English-speaking and French-speaking minority communities and advances the status of English and French in Canadian society.

The situation in Quebec is changing: for the first time since 1976, the number of anglophones in Quebec is on the rise. In 2006, the anglophone population stood at 607,000, up 16,000 from 591,000 in 2001. The rate of growth between 2001 and 2006 was 2.7%, higher than the rate for the francophone population.

First of all, to avoid any ambiguity, it is essential to make it clear in the Official Languages Act that French is the official language of Quebec. We believe it is important to amend the preamble to state that the federal government recognizes French as the official language of Quebec and the common language in Quebec.

That was the statement made in 1974 in section 1 of the statute that would make French the official language of Quebec. That legislation required public utilities and professions to use French to communicate with the public and the government; French was the language of routine communication in government; employees of companies had to be able to communicate with one another and with their superiors in French in the course of carrying out their duties; French had to be used everywhere in business, particularly in business management, company names, public signage, collective agreements and consumer contracts.

Next came the Charter of the French Language, also known as Bill 101, the purpose of which was to make French the language of the government and the law, the language of work, education, communications, trade and business. Quebec governments enforced the legislation in a spirit of fairness and openness, with respect for the institutions of the Quebec English-speaking community and

ethnic minorities, whose invaluable contribution to the development of Quebec we recognize.

Recognition of the Charter of the French Language in no way diminishes the rights and privileges of Quebec's anglophone minority set out in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

No matter how the issue is viewed, it is clear that Quebecers are a nation. Is Canada willing to recognize that fact unconditionally? Is the federal government willing to translate words into deeds and propose measures affirming recognition of the Quebec nation and its language and culture?

Each vote will give us a clear idea of the government's true intentions.

• (1525)

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will share my speaking time with the member for Beauport—Limoilou.

Thank you for allowing me these few minutes to address the House on this important matter. Although I cannot support the motion before us today, I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize our government's commitment to promoting the use of French, not only in Quebec and not only in the workplace, but also in the community across the country.

First, I want to reassure my hon. colleagues that the Government of Canada recognizes the unique role of French in Canada and the importance of Quebec's Charter of the French Language. It is through language that we preserve our collective memory, that we express our pride in our identity and that we share our dreams for the future. For Quebecers, French helps to define them and constitutes the basis of their culture.

That said, we hope that the Government of Quebec and our esteemed colleagues in this House also respect this government's broad mandate and Canadian jurisdictions and Canadian citizens. We hope they understand that Canadian laws have an impact from sea to sea and well beyond the geographic borders of the Province of Quebec.

Let us not forget that Canada is, first of all, a bilingual country. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms clearly provides that English and French are the official languages of Canada and enjoy the same status.

They also have the same rights and privileges as to their use in all the institutions of Parliament and of the Government of Canada. The role of the Government of Canada and of federal language legislation is to promote the use of English and French in Canada through federal and provincial linguistic frameworks suited to the needs and realities of Canada's linguistic communities, including French-language communities in Canada.

Consequently, our charter of rights and our laws already encourage the use of French in Quebec and in the rest of Canada. Contrary to what the opposition critic suggests, they do not limit, prevent or undermine the use of French in Canada, and especially not in Quebec. Quite the contrary.

I now want to draw your attention to the issue of language in the workplace and, more specifically, in federally-regulated workplaces in Quebec. The purpose of the recent private member's Bill C-482 is to amend the Canada Labour Code to require any federal work, undertaking, business or area of federal activity in Quebec to be subject to the conditions of the Charter of the French Language. In fact, I cannot understand how we could subordinate a federal act to a provincial act, regardless of the province or issue in question.

Nor do I want to dwell any further on legal technicalities. I prefer to put the emphasis on facts from the publication of statistics from the 2006 census conducted by Statistics Canada on language, mobility and migration. More than one in four Canadians speak French at work. Nearly 95% of Quebecers speak French at work, which represents a slight increase from 2001.

We have also learned from other sources that French is the principal language used in federally-regulated workplaces in Quebec. No federal or provincial statute will alter those facts.

Contrary to accusations by one of the opposition parties, which have been relayed through the media in recent months, we have no evidence that there are any barriers to the use of French in federally-regulated Quebec businesses.

I am very well aware that out of the thousands of complaints filed with the Quebec complaints office, the vast majority do not relate to language of work.

• (1530)

There is no evidence that there are any barriers to using French in federally regulated workplaces in Quebec. Once again, the Bloc has cried wolf on this issue, but Canadians will not let the wolf be pulled over their eyes. They have understood clearly that the Bloc no longer serves any purpose in Ottawa and the only reason it is raising the hue and cry is to justify its presence here.

Although the Canada Labour Code does not and should not address the question of language of work, federally regulated employers in Quebec are nonetheless committed to preserving, promoting and protecting the language rights and cultural rights of francophone employees and the communities to which they belong.

By choosing to become responsible citizens and active participants in those communities and in the province of Quebec, those employers have also chosen to abide by and accept the use of French in their operations. Federally regulated employers are well aware of the importance of French in Quebec and of the Charter of the French Language. Federally regulated businesses in Quebec also understand that the language of work is dictated by the reality of that place of work.

The vast majority of their customers in Quebec speak French. The vast majority of their workers therefore necessarily speak French. Speaking French is thus a sound business practice that improves

### *Business of Supply*

their efficiency. Refusing to allow French to be used in a workplace in Quebec would quite simply be suicide.

I think I can easily persuade my honourable colleagues that French is in fact the most commonly spoken language in workplaces in Quebec, whether they are subject to provincial or federal regulation. The amendments to the Canada Labour Code proposed in Bill C-482 are therefore completely pointless and cannot be supported by this government.

There are occasions, however, when workers in Quebec have to speak English in order to do their jobs, and even the Charter of the French Language recognizes those exceptions to the language laws. Businesses that operate in Quebec have to look beyond provincial borders in order to sell their products, purchase cutting edge technology, develop their networks and take advantage of new markets. Federally regulated businesses cut across provincial and international boundaries by their very nature.

For many federal employers, their activities must not and cannot be circumscribed within a single province. Their profit margin depends on their ability to provide services and sell products beyond the provincial borders, whether their business is transportation, telecommunications or international finance.

It would be both unreasonable and harmful to require these companies and their employees to limit their ability to do business in English or in any other language in the world, outside Quebec. When the Canadian banking industry expands in Latin America and the Caribbeans, for example, Spanish becomes a valuable asset. When supply chains in the world extend all the way to China, it becomes all the more urgent that Canadians learn Chinese.

In other words, the language of work should also depend on trade requirements, without excluding French as the main language, but making it a needed complement. The pre-eminence of French in Quebec would certainly not be jeopardized by the occasional use of other languages, including English, during a day's work.

Companies all over the world are rapidly becoming multilingual and not unilingual. They are more open to foreign markets, foreign technologies, foreign investment and even foreign languages as they try to win new markets in the world economy.

To conclude, I fear that legislation on the use of one language at the expense of other languages would only slow down economic growth in Quebec. Multinational companies would certainly turn to economies that promote competitive advantages instead of restricting them.

• (1535)

If that is the way the Bloc Quebecois intends to stand up for Quebec, I can understand why many of its members are leaving and others are wondering if they still serve a purpose here, in Ottawa.

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, after listening to the remarks from my Conservative party colleague, I have some questions to ask him.

All the members of the Conservative party, especially the francophones from Quebec, are congratulating themselves on having recognized Quebec as a nation within a united Canada. When they recognized Quebec as a nation, what were they recognizing?

*Business of Supply*

The language and the culture of that nation are not being treated with respect. We are just asking for an amendment to the Official Languages Act, so that the original language of Quebec, French, is treated with respect. And we are also asking for the Canada Labour Code to be amended so that we can promote our French language. Because we are a nation. The Conservatives recognized that.

So what was it that Conservative members were recognizing when they recognized Quebec as a nation? Just an empty shell?

• (1540)

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out to my colleague that the Canada Labour Code exists to protect workers' health and safety. The Code was never intended or designed to be used as a political lever. A number of enterprises under federal jurisdiction are now setting their sights internationally, which requires their workers to be bilingual. And francophones can usually work in their mother tongue.

Members of the Bloc have become disconnected from the people of Quebec and they can no longer explain why they are still in Ottawa. So they desperately try to find solutions to problems that do not exist. The Bloc does not understand how things are done in Ottawa. This bill would simply serve to isolate the people of Quebec once more. The Bloc may crow about this bill, but the reality is that the same bill will do nothing to improve working conditions for Quebecers.

I am happy to see the Bloc having to recognize that it is, after all, the Conservative government that is defending the values, the interests, and the French identity of all the people of Quebec.

**Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that the member has not understood the Bloc's Bill C-482, so I will remind him about it. The bill will require that the federal government recognize the Charter of the French language within Quebec—not China—and will allow it to apply the Charter to enterprises under federal jurisdiction.

I would like the member to tell me what I should tell my fellow Quebecers when they decide to take an Air Canada plane and go from Montreal to Toronto or Montreal to Vancouver. There are no French language newspapers and they do not even have services in French. When they board, they do not hear "Bienvenue à bord", they hear "Welcome aboard". These Air Canada employees are subject to federal regulation and they are in Quebec.

We want to be served in French by employees to whom the Canada Labour Code applies. I would like him to answer that.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Mr. Speaker, I am going to try to answer my dear colleague regarding the Canada Labour Code. The Code deals only with matters that relate to labour standards. Part I deals with labour relations, Part II deals with occupational health and safety, and Part III deals with labour standards. The Code does not address either language or rights.

Even the Quebec Labour Standards Act deals almost exclusively with issues relating to employment, rather than language issues.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Status of Women, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to discuss the motion introduced by the Bloc Québécois calling for the Charter of the French language to be applied to enterprises

under federal jurisdiction in relation to the language of work. The motion is based on a misunderstanding of the role of the federal government in promoting French in Canada and it is for that reason that I would like to discuss what the government does in this area.

Contrary to what the Bloc asserts, our government is committed to expanding the influence of French language and culture and that is what I would like to demonstrate.

I would first like to provide assurances that my government is firmly committed to honouring its commitments and obligations in terms of supporting official languages and promoting French and English, throughout Canada. I would like to talk about our commitment to official languages, a few of our achievements, and other initiatives we have taken, such as the government's participation in the celebrations marking Quebec City's 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary, which illustrate the importance of the French fact to us.

The Conservative government takes the francophone reality of Quebec into account in everything it does, including the implementation of the Official Languages Act. It gives full measure to the linguistic duality of Canada, which it is committed to promoting both in Quebec and in the other provinces and territories.

In a speech delivered to the chamber of commerce in Rivière-du-Loup on December 7, 2007, Prime Minister Harper said that our Conservative government practices...

• (1545)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Order, please. I heard the Prime Minister's name. I would ask the parliamentary secretary to use riding names or the name of the position that members fill.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has said that our Conservative government practices open federalism that respects the historical fact of Quebec's cultural and linguistic specificity and gives Quebec the flexibility and autonomy it needs to maintain its francophone identity within a strong and united Canada.

Linguistic duality is fundamental to Canadian society and enriches both the country and its citizens. According to a Decima poll taken in 2006 for the Department of Canadian Heritage, 69% of Canadians born abroad think that they are culturally enriched by Canada's linguistic duality and 72% think that the Government of Canada should play a leading role in promoting and protecting the status and use of French in Canadian society.

The English and French languages and the official languages policy are at the heart of the Canadian identity. Knowledge of these languages helps Canadians participate socially, economically and culturally.

For these reasons, our government promised in the last throne speech to bring forward a strategy for implementing the next stage of the Action Plan for Official Languages. We appointed Bernard Lord to act as special advisor and conduct extensive consultations. He has submitted his report now and it was recently made public. The government will build on it to develop the next stage of the Action Plan for Official Languages.

*Business of Supply*

The government has begun examining the initiatives that have been undertaken as part of its final evaluation of the action plan and it will ensure that the best practices are incorporated into the new official languages program.

We will continue the constant support we have shown for the official languages by bringing forward a strategy to give effect to the next stage of the Action Plan for Official Languages running from 2008 to 2013.

We are currently reviewing all the projects and the federal strategy. This will enable us to renew, modify as necessary and improve the government projects for promoting linguistic duality.

There are some bilateral and multilateral agreements among the Government of Canada and the provinces and territories regarding the official languages. Our support includes recognition of the key role that Quebec plays in the Canadian francophonie.

From a multilateral perspective, the Ministerial Conference on the Canadian Francophonie is the main forum for intergovernmental collaboration. Established in 1974, the MCCF brings together the provincial and territorial ministers responsible for the Canadian Francophonie, francophone affairs, Acadian affairs, French-language services or similar matters, and the federal minister responsible for official languages.

The MCCF's mandate is to promote intergovernmental cooperation, debate intergovernmental issues that involve the Canadian Francophonie, and sustain dialogue conducive to the development of public policies that strengthen the Canadian linguistic duality.

During the September 2007 annual MCCF meeting in Halifax, the ministers endorsed and agreed to proceed with implementation of the report titled *Canadian Francophonie: Issues, Challenges and Future Directions*, which summarizes consultations held across the country in the spring and summer of 2006.

It will also take into account results from community assemblies, such as the summit of francophone and Acadian communities, reports from standing parliamentary committees, the report of the Official Languages Commissioner, the results of the 2006 census published on December 4 and the important Post-Censal Survey on the Vitality of Official Language Minority Communities conducted by Statistics Canada.

Our government will continue to build on existing achievements, so that Canadians can benefit from all the advantages of being in a country with two official languages, a cultural treasure that is unique in North America.

Since our government came to power, open federalism has been our watchword, and our achievements reflect that approach.

• (1550)

While everyone agrees that bilingualism is valuable to an individual and an asset for our country; it is also true to say that better understanding between francophones and anglophones requires that the two language communities get to know and support each other.

Our young people are the key to that better understanding. Thanks in part to support from the Department of Canadian Heritage,

more than half the students in our schools today are learning French or English as a second language throughout the country.

In the 2007 budget, we also announced an amount of \$30 million over two years to promote increased use of minority languages, especially among young people, in the daily life of Canadians living in minority language communities.

We also want to create opportunities outside the classroom for young Canadians to enjoy linguistic and cultural experiences in their second language. We especially want all young Canadians to have an opportunity to appreciate the French language and culture and to understand what an asset they are for our country.

As the Speech from the Throne pointed out, our initiative takes account of the contributions made by other levels of government. One of the key objectives of our government is to strengthen our federation and to work more closely with each level of government, while respecting each other's jurisdictions.

It is beneficial for everyone because the work we are doing, in cooperation with the provinces and territories, is producing solid results on the ground.

In addition to the agreements dealing with education and services in the minority language, we have made significant investments along with the provinces and territories to establish, enlarge or renew community infrastructure in francophone communities in the various regions of Canada.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages has met with the provincial and territorial ministers responsible for culture and heritage. They discussed measures for promoting and increasing awareness of francophone communities, in particular, through cultural tourism and festivals, for which we have announced the launch of a new support program.

Last fall, the minister also met with the ministers responsible for the Canadian francophonie in Halifax. This federal-provincial-territorial conference is an excellent platform for ensuring that the very diverse objectives and challenges of francophones all across the country are taken into account when developing our programs and our policies.

The members of the Bloc can continue to try, in vain, to justify their presence in Ottawa by inventing new squabbles but Quebeckers are not taken in. They support a government that offers them real, open federalism that promotes French everywhere in Canada.

**Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I know that today is April Fool's Day but I never expected to hear so many bad jokes from the government members. They rhyme off an endless list of little steps taken by this government, such as promoting learning of a second official language by young people. I hope they promote that and it is quite proper, but we are talking about a nation.

As Quebeckers, what we are talking about must have a direct appeal to our hearts. That is quite different from saying that they gave money for the 400th anniversary of Quebec City. It would have been big news if the federal government had not given it. There is always a limit to listening to a litany of the things that, in any case, all governments do.

*Business of Supply*

This Conservative government makes me think precisely of the previous Liberal government under Jean Chrétien, who after a painful struggle finally agreed to talk about a “distinct society”. It was quite a story. I have just read his book. It is always interesting to read the books of our opponents. He wound up by saying he would tell English Canada that, in any case, a “distinct society” meant absolutely nothing. That is what he confirms in his book. A nation within a united Canada; it is the same thing.

Earlier, the parliamentary secretary said that, usually, people could work in French under the Canada Labour Code. What are they doing about the people who, usually, cannot work in French under the Canada Labour Code?

• (1555)

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Mr. Speaker, first, I thank my colleague for his question; but the Bloc Québécois has no lessons to teach me, especially on the subject of the francophonie.

They appropriated the Quebec nation because they were sovereignists but for us that means a great deal. I live my life in French; my reality is a Quebec reality. My emotions are Quebec emotions, and when I hurt, I hurt in French.

They do not understand that for the Quebec nation, for all the other Quebecers who are not sovereignists, that has enormous meaning. We are no longer ashamed to walk the streets of Quebec and to say that we are happy to live in Canada while defending our Quebec and our language.

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am going to try to get us back on topic, since it gets a bit emotional if we start saying which language we have trouble in and it is very off track if we start talking about the festivals the minister has subsidized.

The real point today is whether we are willing to debate an issue which deals with language requirements for Quebec workers in areas that are not yet covered by Quebec legislation.

I would like to ask my colleague, whom I have known a long time, why she considers it normal that an employee of a caisse populaire cannot be subject to language requirements that have nothing to do with his or her duties, while a person who performs identical duties across the street can be forced to know another language in order to accommodate the employer. How is it that a bus driver in Gatineau, when the bus crosses over to the Ottawa side, can be subject to language requirements that do not have to be met by bus drivers in Montreal? That is what it all comes down to. It is a motion.

The issue is whether we are willing to discuss it. As far as the bill is concerned, we do not yet have a clear idea, but we want to hear the experts and meet with workers’ representatives and social groups. We want to be able to debate the issue.

If she truly believes in the recognition of Quebec society, can my friend and colleague—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Mr. Speaker, everyone agrees that working in French is important. Everyone recognizes here in Canada that we have two languages: English and French.

In Quebec, we speak French, as everyone knows, but there is also an anglophone minority that needs to be defended. I stand up for that community. I am a Quebecker, I speak French, but other Quebeckers are English and they need our support as federalists.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to debate today’s motion. From the outset I wish to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

I will reread the motion:

That, in the opinion of the House, following the recognition of the Quebec nation by this House, the government should move from words to deeds and propose measures to solidify that recognition, including compliance with the language of labour relations of Quebec’s Charter of the French language regarding enterprises under federal jurisdiction located in Quebec.

In November 2006, this government presented the following motion, which was adopted by the House of Commons:

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

This recognition is a victory for the Bloc. The government was pressured into presenting that motion because the Bloc Québécois, at the time, forced the government’s hand by presenting its own motion recognizing the Quebec nation. As a result, Canada recognized our existence as a national community for the first time.

The dictionary defines nation as a group of people, generally large, characterized by awareness of its unity and a desire to live together. The nation is the community we belong to, the group we identify with, the group we talk with in order to make decisions that concern the organization of our society.

It is also a favoured place for making decisions of a political nature, and to recognize a nation is to finally recognize the existence of a political body equipped with legitimate rights and political aspirations.

By recognizing the Quebec nation, the House of Commons has recognized Quebecers’ right to control their own social, economic and cultural development within Quebec.

The House has also recognized the legitimacy of Quebec’s repeated requests to give Quebecers the power and necessary resources to develop their own society.

Nonetheless, the recognition of a nation has to be much more than symbolic—which it is right now. Nations have rights and the one right they have in particular is the right to self determination, in other words, to determine their own development themselves. And if Quebecers form a nation, it is not up to Canadians to dictate how that nation should organize its society.

*Business of Supply*

That said, a consensus is building in Quebec on the fact that the Quebecers form a nation and, what is more, have done so for a very long time. Back in the early days after the conquest, Lord Durham referred to two nations in conflict within the same state. Then we had Maurice Duplessis, who spoke of it in 1946; Jean Lesage in 1963, Daniel Johnson in 1968, and René Lévesque's reference to Canada's being composed of two nations each equal to the other. I could name a number of other instances as well.

On October 30, 2003, the Quebec National Assembly passed the following motion unanimously:

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

The motion does not say that the people of Quebec form a nation if Canada remains as it is, or that Quebec is a nation if it opts for sovereignty. It says that the people of Quebec form a nation, period.

We can conclude from this that Quebecers form a nation regardless of the choices they make in future. Canada has recognized that the people of Quebec form a nation and it must act accordingly from here on in.

This takes me back to the French fact. The last census in 2006 presents some worrisome findings on the status of French outside Quebec, as well as within Quebec, Montreal in particular.

• (1600)

French has lost ground everywhere in Canada, including Quebec, even though more immigrants than ever are speaking it in the home. The last Statistics Canada census revealed some very worrisome figures indeed. Even though the number of persons with French as their mother tongue increased between 2001 and 2006, their relative weight decreased and they represent only 22% of the population.

As for the language in predominant use in the home, the relative share of French is constantly dropping, from 26% in 1971 to 21% in 2006. This is a source of concern to francophone communities outside Quebec. In all territories and provinces outside Quebec, unlike the figures for English, the number of those using French predominantly in the home is lower than the number of those with French as their mother tongue. According to the 2006 census, 4.1% of the population outside Quebec report French as their mother tongue, a drop from the 4.4% of the 2001 census. This is a continuation of a trend that has prevailed for more than half a century.

In Quebec, the number of persons speaking English most often in the home rose by 40,000 between 2001 and 2006. The rate of increase in the population reporting English as most used in the home was 5.5% over 2001, or twice the figure for French in the home.

On the island of Montreal, the percentage of those reporting French as their mother tongue in 2006 dropped to below half of the population. It is said that the increase in English as language of use is eight times that of French. These are not my figures, they come from Statistics Canada.

This is a cause for considerable concern. They say that the gains the francophone group can hope to make because of increased mobility toward French will still be neutralized by the effects of international immigration. I have already mentioned Lord Durham,

who was sent out from England after the troubles of 1837. He said that the primary and firm intent of the British government of the day was to introduce an English population into this province and the only way to accomplish that was through immigration.

Many have turned to immigration to supposedly alleviate labour shortages. However, most immigrants to Quebec are anglophone. That is why it is extremely important for immigrants coming to Quebec to understand that they are coming to a province whose official language is French.

Currently, we have to deal with Canada's multiculturalism policy. What is the difference between multiculturalism and Quebec's interculturalism? Basically, Canadian multiculturalism arises from the Canadian belief that all citizens are equal. It enables all Canadians to preserve their identity, be proud of their origins and feel a sense of belonging, whereas in Quebec, interculturalism allows people to be proud to live within the Quebec nation.

There are numerous problems with the Canada Multiculturalism Act. People do not want to speak French. When they come to Canada, they are told that they are part of a multicultural continent. Quebec's approach—asking them to learn French—does not appeal to them much. Newcomers can easily become confused, because Quebec portrays itself as a French-language state, but it is in a bilingual country that promotes bilingualism.

• (1605)

People arriving in Quebec are getting conflicting messages. And who can blame them? We have to make every effort to integrate them into francophone society. That is why we have our francophone society charter. I would note that the purpose of the charter is to define the linguistic rights of all Quebecers, the right to speak French, the language of the majority.

• (1610)

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise and speak today on the motion introduced by the Bloc Québécois on opposition day.

This motion was introduced pursuant to the federal Parliament's recognition of the Quebec nation. It is apparent now that the Conservative government has been trying, since it voted in favour of recognizing their nation, to persuade Quebecers that it has given them a little more than they used to have in terms of rights, regulations and jurisprudence.

The Conservative government admitted that Quebec constitutes a nation. We already knew that Quebec was a nation thanks to its language and culture but we know now that this government has no intention of adapting to this new reality and showing some respect for the Quebec nation.

We, the Bloc members of Parliament, represent the nation of Quebec. We believe that the Conservative government has a political and even a moral obligation now to translate this recognition into deeds and facts. If the government votes for this motion today, there would be deeds and facts to recognize the language, culture and diversity of Quebec.

*Business of Supply*

The motion we have brought forward today asks the federal government to recognize and incorporate into its legislation and programs one of the basic characteristics of our nation. I am speaking obviously about the future of the French language.

We all know that French is essential to the identity of the Quebec nation. We demanded recognition as a nation because we have this language, culture, heritage and history, which have been part of us for a very long time.

On the political level, our National Assembly adopted the Charter of the French Language in 1977 in recognition of Quebecers' desire to ensure its quality and vigour.

We decided collectively as a nation to make French the language of state and the legal language, as well as the normal, customary language of instruction, communications, commerce, business and, of course, work.

Thirty years after the Charter of the French Language was adopted, it is obvious that it was a turning point in the affirmation of the identity of the Quebec nation.

When we speak now of the Quebec nation, there is a consensus in Quebec that Quebecers have formed a nation for many years. On October 30, 2003, the Quebec National Assembly unanimously passed a motion reaffirming that the people of Quebec form a nation. It was not for nothing that the Quebec National Assembly specified that it was reasserting the existence of a Quebec nation. The resolution was actually just repeating what all Quebec governments had been saying for decades.

It was not until November 2006 that the federal Parliament recognized the obvious fact that Quebecers form a nation. It recognized this fact, but without giving it any substance.

I would still like to congratulate our NDP colleagues who support our motion today and who, like us, are trying to put a little more flesh onto the concept that was adopted in this House. However, we cannot recognize the Quebec nation without at the same time recognizing that it has an identity, and that it has values, interests and rights. Like all nations, our nation has the right to control its own development. It has the right to internal self-determination, which implies that the House of Commons, in recognizing the Québécois as a nation, recognized they have the right to control their social, economic and cultural development.

As I said at the start of my remarks, our nation has its own identity, which implies that the federal government recognizes, particularly in its laws and practices that French is the language of Quebec and that its culture is different from the rest of Canada.

•(1615)

As the motion states, the federal government must now move from words to deeds. In the motion tabled today in this House, the Bloc Québécois calls on the federal government to recognize and comply with the Charter of the French Language, especially in regard to the language of work in enterprises under federal jurisdiction.

At present, there are two systems in our nation. There are companies where the workers are under the official languages

regulations—the language of Canada—and other companies where the workers are under the jurisdiction of Charter of the French Language. Those are two systems in the same nation. We want to see a single way of operating and only one language used in all Quebec companies. That is simple when you are a nation.

The federal government must truly recognize the Quebec nation—not simply in words. Conservative members boast about having recognized Quebec as a nation. I asked a Conservative member what concepts of nationhood they recognized, and what new rights, regulatory powers and privileges have they granted to this nation. Nothing. No answer. They take Quebecers for idiots. They just tell them that they form a nation; but they are given no new rights. Quebecers are not fooled.

If Parliament recognizes the Quebec nation, if the Conservatives, Liberals and New Democrats recognize the nation, they cannot logically be opposed to the principle of Bill C-482, which would require the federal government to recognize the Charter of the French Language in Quebec. That would enable it to extend its application to federally regulated businesses. Moving from words to deeds does not just entail the example appearing in the wording of the motion, that is to say the application of the Charter of the French Language to employees under federal jurisdiction. It also means recognizing that multiculturalism is a barrier to the model for integrating newcomers in Quebec society, and that there is another Quebec culture that has not yet been recognized by the Canadian government.

Quebec is not a bilingual society. It is false to say that we are opposed to anglophones. I heard some remarks by Conservative Party members. They said that we were going to war against the anglophone minority that built Quebec. That is not true. We simply want to affirm Quebec's majority language, which is French.

Unlike the Canadian model, Quebec relies on interculturalism as its integration model. In other words, unlike the Canadian approach, which is to value diversity, the Quebec approach is one that is based on the learning and recognition of the French language, the official language and language common to the citizenry and on the adherence to a set of fundamental values that constitute the historic nature of Quebec.

I will close my remarks by reminding the members of this House that the point of this motion is that we must now move from words to deeds in order to solidify the recognition of the Quebec nation. Like my Bloc Québécois colleagues, like many Quebecers, I remain convinced that the best way for the Quebec nation to take complete charge of its political, economic, social and cultural development is sovereignty for Quebec. However, the addition of this element to that nation here, in the House of Commons, is a plus and means more powers for Quebec. That is why it is important for us.

*Business of Supply*

● (1620)

**Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé just told us about major principles relating to the universal move to revitalize national cultures. Under these principles, each nation has an obligation to bring a particular contribution to the international community. This is what my colleague just spoke about. It does not stop with holidays such as Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day. It applies everywhere, even in the workplace.

The National Assembly intends to pursue this objective in a spirit of fairness and open-mindedness, respectful of the institutions of the English-speaking community of Québec, and respectful of the ethnic minorities, whose valuable contribution to the development of Québec it readily acknowledges.

I have a question for the hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé. The National Assembly recognizes the rights of the Amerinds and the Inuit of Quebec, the first inhabitants of this land. Are we entitled to the same recognition as that given by the National Assembly to Quebec's first nations, namely the right to their original language and culture everywhere, and particularly in the workplace?

**Mr. Guy André:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I think that the recognition of aboriginal nations, and of the Quebec nation, is important for the federal Parliament. As I mentioned in my speech, it is critical that we ask this House to recognize the Quebec nation by recognizing its language, culture, heritage and history. It is also critical to have the right to control one's tools for social, economic and political development. That is part of the rights of a nation, and that is what today's motion is asking for.

**Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, last summer, the member for Mégantic—L'Érable made an announcement in Sherbrooke. Perhaps I should call him the member for Mégantic—Maple. He sent a memo to the media that was written in English only. The media in the region of Sherbrooke are primarily French-language media, and the member surely knew that. These media and reporters did not appreciate the fact that even a parliamentary secretary would not respect Quebec's official language in his releases.

This is a far cry from respecting the Quebec nation and its language, as the Conservative government likes to boast. Could my colleague explain why the Bloc Québécois is the only party that defends Quebec's interests, language and culture in this united Canada?

**Mr. Guy André:** Mr. Speaker, I think it is a shame to see a member, especially a member from Quebec, inadvertently send out a media advisory in English. Sometimes, when a person joins a party that has values other than those of Quebec, that promotes bilingualism as Trudeau saw it and as the Conservative Party seems to see it in Canada, without respecting Quebec's identity, he can lose his way and make mistakes like that. The Conservative Party members defend the dominant Conservative ideology, which does not respect Quebec's values and interests. As a result, they lose their identity. They claim to be Canadians, and deep down they convince themselves that they are Canadians and not Quebecers. That is why they sometimes make mistakes like that.

● (1625)

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in this House to speak to this motion that we in the NDP are going to support.

In fact, it is an opposition motion that proposes that in Quebec, in federally regulated companies, work can be done in both languages.

I would just like to mention some aspects of the language of labour relations that are covered by chapter VI of the charter, to which the motion pertains. These are not things people can be opposed to, but normal things in a largely francophone society such as the Quebec nation.

According to this chapter on the language of labour relations, when an employer publishes an offer of employment in a daily newspaper published in a language other than French, English for example, the employer must also publish it in French. This is only natural. As well, an arbitration award must be translated into French or English, as the case may be, at the parties' expense.

This is not a huge requirement, but a normal one. That is why we are going to support this motion.

We have been hearing some rather hysterical presentations from the Liberal Party. The Liberals are saying it would be the end of the world if workers in Quebec had access to arbitral awards in their language. To the Liberals it would also be the end of the world if an employer posted a job ad in both French and English. This is absolutely irresponsible.

I want to come back to this because it is not normal for the Liberal Party to act this way. It might be normal to the Liberals, but not in the eyes of the public.

The past two years have given us an idea of what a Conservative government has to offer in terms of official languages and respecting the French language within Canada. As we have seen, the Conservative government has abolished the court challenges program in a very clear effort to undermine francophone minorities outside Quebec. The anglophone minority in Quebec has also been very clear in its criticism of this Conservative government's completely irresponsible actions.

There is not a single Conservative MP who can say that this government has accomplished anything for the French language or linguistic minority rights in Canada. It would be utterly false to claim that this government has contributed anything. On the contrary, the Conservatives are in the process of slowly eroding linguistic rights.

The hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst, the NDP official languages critic, works very hard in the Standing Committee on Official Languages to prevent the government from eliminating these rights. The same is true for the hon. member for Outremont, as well as for our leader, the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth, the hon. member for Victoria, the hon. member for British Columbia Southern Interior and the entire NDP caucus. We are all working together to stop this government from eliminating these rights.

*Business of Supply*

Not since the Quiet Revolution has this House of Commons, or anyone in this country, seen a stronger defender of the French language than the New Democratic Party. There has not been a stronger defender from the start. I see that a Conservative MP is agreeing with me and I could not be happier.

Since its creation, the New Democratic Party has recognized Quebec's right to self determination. An historic battle was fought in this House when the New Democratic party stood up to prevent the War Measures Act from being imposed in Quebec.

• (1630)

Only the members of the New Democratic Party, under their leader of the time, Tommy Douglas—recognized by Canadians from coast to coast as the strongest NDP leader in Canadian history—stood in this House to say no to the War Measures Act. From the outset, French and bilingualism had their most ardent and strongest supporters in New Democrat caucuses in the House of Commons.

That battle has not just been waged here. In Quebec, with our former leaders, Thérèse Casgrain and Robert Cliche, New Democrats have worked to defend and promote the French language.

And not just in Quebec. In Atlantic Canada, the former NDP leader and current member for Halifax was the most ardent defender of Nova Scotia Acadians as long as she led the NDP.

Ms. Elizabeth Weir and the current member for Acadie—Bathurst led the fight for francophone rights and official bilingualism in New Brunswick. I will come back to that. Because it must be said that the Liberal party in New Brunswick is now undermining those rights little by little.

In Ontario, the NDP government and its high-quality cabinet—though the leader at the time was less so—promoted the French college system and the use of French on the road network.

In Western Canada, where I am from, NDP governments in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia and Yukon have done the most to move francophone rights forward. In Manitoba, it was through the Official Languages Act. In Saskatchewan and British Columbia, it was by the formation of francophone school boards, the first such school boards in those provinces. In Yukon, it was through territorial official languages legislation.

As a British Columbian, I can say that French language and culture are spreading everywhere today. When I was young, there were one or two francophone schools; now there are dozens all across the province. Since I attend meetings, conferences and gatherings of French-speaking British Columbians, I see how this francophone presence is flourishing on the west coast of our country. The presence has very diverse origins: from Africa, Asia, Europe of course, Quebec, Acadia, and French-speaking Manitoba and Ontario. These people speak French with different accents which are truly beautiful to hear. You can hear accents of people from all over the world coming together to speak French in British Columbia.

This is why I am most confident to say that historically, our movement or political party has always sought to respect and promote the French language, not only here in Ottawa, but across Canada. We are extremely proud of this past and we are still fighting

hard for this cause today. We will support any measures that will advance the equality of francophones in Canada.

[*English*]

I would like to come back to the issue of some of the Liberal Party's interventions and speeches that we have heard on this motion. I believe they were completely irresponsible.

The presentation by the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine a few hours ago was completely over the top. It was completely irresponsible. She knows exactly what the impact of this motion is. It is essentially to provide the opportunity for folks and workers in Quebec to have access, in French as well as in English, to services provided by businesses that are governed by federal legislation. I mentioned that earlier in my speech. We are not talking about dramatic changes. We are talking about very sensible approaches to ensuring equality for francophone workers in Quebec. Of course, this is something that we have always supported.

I find it very regrettable that the Liberals are trying to fuel some kind of linguistic tension. They seem to think there is some sort of political advantage to be gained by fuelling that vision and those differences in Canada.

I have seen that myself in western Canada. Every single time the NDP has pushed for equality, whether we are talking about Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia or Yukon, or whether we are talking about Leo Piquette. He is the franco-Albertan MLA who almost on his own and with the support of the Alberta NDP pushed for substantive changes in Alberta for greater respect for francophones there. Every single time the NDP has done this it has been the Liberals provincially who have been opposing and fighting those movements forward for respect for the French language.

We have seen this most recently in New Brunswick, where an immersion program that has been immensely successful is now being cut by a Liberal provincial government.

Immersion programs set up by the NDP government in British Columbia have been successful. In my community of New Westminster parents came from all over the community and lined up with sleeping bags to sleep in gyms over the course of a weekend to make sure that their children were registered in a French immersion program.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

I think the Bloc Québécois is not aware of that. It is unfortunate, because there is a francophone presence throughout the country and also a real love of the French language that I even see in my own community. It is too bad that the Bloc Québécois seems incapable of seeing how much things have changed in English Canada in four decades.

It is unfortunate, but we will nonetheless pursue our efforts on this side of the House to put out this information. I do not believe the members of the Bloc Québécois are ill-intentioned. I simply believe they are not well informed.

*Business of Supply*

[English]

We have seen how popular are the immersion programs. Today there are thousands and thousands of Canadian children studying in French all day, yet in New Brunswick a Liberal administration is trying to cut and gut that program.

We have heard the federal Liberal spokespeople, such as their candidate in Papineau call Canadians lazy if they only know one language. I think it is even more disconcerting that that same candidate said that there should not be French schools that are separate from English schools, that francophones should simply, I suppose in a way, be shoved into English schools and forced to be in an English environment. In effect it is an assimilation of francophones. It has been a hard fought battle that francophone communities across the country and anglophone communities in Quebec have delighted in actually succeeding in establishing separate schools.

Yet no one in the Liberal caucus said anything about that forced assimilation. No one in the Liberal caucus said anything about calling unilingual Canadians, whether French or English, lazy. Not a single Liberal stood up to condemn those comments.

I find that to be very regrettable. Given the context of the comments that have been made today, I find that the Liberal Party is extremely disappointing in that it seems to have no principles but that of trying to pursue some sort of cheap political advantage, whatever that may be at any one time.

• (1640)

[Translation]

When we talk about these issues, when we talk about immersion to help people learn a second language, when we talk about the right to work in one's mother tongue, as set out in this motion, when we talk about this ability in Canada, regardless of its origins, we all agree that talking and being able to communicate is a fundamental aspect of our confederation and democracy in Canada.

I am from British Columbia. I am proud of my Norwegian, Irish and English heritage. I am proud of my English language, which is a very beautiful language. But I am also proud of my ability to speak the language of Molière, even if it is not perfect, and to be able to communicate with Acadians, Quebeckers, francophones from western Canada and francophones from Ontario. It is one of Canada's treasures that we simply cannot overlook.

We cannot simply say that since we passed legislation on official languages 40 years ago, we are done and there is nothing more to do. It is like a garden. We must continue to work on it to make sure that our efforts are paying off, to ensure compliance and to ensure progress on the issues.

We know there is a problem with businesses under federal jurisdiction. As we all know, over the past few years, there have been dozens and dozens of complaints and no follow-up. Everyone knows there is a problem. It only makes sense to start looking for solutions. One principle is very clear and has been mentioned by several members of this House: a francophone in Quebec has the right to work in his or her mother tongue. There is nothing magical or extraordinary about this, it simply makes sense.

It is the responsibility of the House of Commons to respect the logic of what is being proposed here today. That is why we support the motion and that is why, on this side of the House, we will continue our efforts to defend linguistic minorities and to promote the French language in order to preserve this aspect of Canada, which is greatly cherished, I believe, by the vast majority of Canadians.

**Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Burnaby—New Westminster on the quality of his French. He speaks French very well and I admire him for wanting to speak in the language of Molière like he does. However, I point out to him that if we do not use the language of Shakespeare, it is because we do not wish to, not because we are not capable. I am making this distinction because he said earlier that the Bloc members were not well informed. I am sorry, but I travelled all across Canada and I know full well who speaks French and who does not in Canada. To claim that we are not well informed is misinformation.

The member always talks about the Liberal Party, but we know that it is the governing party that is opposed to the fact that the people can speak French in their workplace in Quebec.

I would like the member to comment on a statement by the Prime Minister. He said: "As a federal political leader, I would not interfere in Quebec's linguistic policy and I would let the courts deal with the constitutional disputes."

The Prime Minister also said: "It would be incorrect to claim that I agree with every aspect of Bill 101. It is one thing to recognize the predominance of the French language and to promote French as the language spoken at home."

The member spoke well about our motion. Could he tell us what he thinks of the Conservatives in that regard?

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond to the hon. member.

When I said that Bloc members were misinformed, I was referring to their knowledge of francophone and francophile communities outside Quebec. I said that Bloc members were often very well informed about many aspects of our work, but that is one shortcoming I have noticed, with all due respect. Take the francophone community in British Columbia, for example. Francophones are present in many other parts of the country, not to mention millions of francophiles. However, I have been in this House for three and a half years and I have never heard anyone recognize what has been going on in other provinces for the past 30 or 40 years. That is the only aspect I was referring to, nothing more. But it is something that is dear to me, because I have yet to hear any Bloc member talk about it. I am not criticizing. It is a simple remark about something that is important to me.

To answer the second part of the member's question about Conservative policies, I have to say the member is absolutely correct. This government does not understand that merely starting a press conference in French does not a true national linguistic policy make. For as long as the Conservatives have been in power, there has been no true linguistic policy in Canada.

*Business of Supply*

•(1645)

[English]

**Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, during the first hour of debate on Bill C-482, a bill to amend the Official Languages Act to force the federal government to recognize the importance of Bill 101 in Quebec, as well as private enterprises under the federal jurisdiction with respect to French as the language of work, the NDP was not really sure of the direction it wanted to take. As a matter of fact, the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst said that they would vote in favour of the bill just so they could study it in committee.

I would like to ask the hon. member what he wishes to accomplish by doing so. Is the member aware of the implications that the passage of such a bill would have on the province of Quebec, not to mention the whole country? Did the hon. member not listen to the arguments brought forward by the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party that undeniably demonstrated the negative effect such a bill would have if passed?

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, I disagree with the hon. member. As usual, and it is unfortunate, what he has done is he has simplified and ignored an important issue.

It is the same way the Conservative Party has ignored the housing crisis in this country and the economic dislocation that we are seeing. Most Canadian families are earning less now than they were before. We just keep hearing the Conservatives with their talking points and we hear it again here, that there is no problem.

The fact that there are dozens and dozens of complaints that cannot seek a resolution, the fact that often we see workers unable to work in their language, unable to function in their language when simple courtesy and respect would necessitate that those businesses adapt to a certain extent, the fact that there is a problem is something that seems to be ignored by the Conservative government.

The Conservatives simply say, “It is not a problem. We are not going to deal with it”. We are seeing this problem and a lot of other problems festering because the Conservatives seem to have inaction as their middle name.

The only things they seem to be able to bring in are corporate tax cuts, and they bring tens of billions there. They just shovel money off the back of a truck to the corporate sector, and the fact that most Canadian families are earning less but they are working harder and harder, the fact that our health care system is slowly falling into crisis, the fact that we have a housing crisis with hundreds of thousands of Canadians sleeping on the streets tonight, they just seem to say, “It is not a problem. If it is not a corporate tax cut, we cannot deal with it”.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the hon. member for his speech.

While we are having the debate, a wonderful thing is happening in my riding. A delegation from Baie-Saint-Paul, Quebec, is in our town of Nelson, B.C. I will have the great pleasure to join them tomorrow and I will meet these people and talk to them this week. I

also want to add that when I was a teacher, my students participated in two exchanges with Quebec students, and I accompanied them.

I would like to ask the following question to the member. Does he think that if we made more exchanges, if we had more contacts with our friends in Quebec, English speaking Canadians would understand why it is essential to protect the French language in Quebec? Would they be more willing to work with our Quebec friends to protect the French language in Québec? That is my question to the hon. member.

•(1650)

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I have always admired the quality of his French and his English. He does a great job of representing one of the most beautiful parts of our country.

He is absolutely right. We live in the world's largest democratic country. There has never been another democratic state as big as Canada. However, over the last 20 years, first under the Liberals and then under the Conservatives, cuts have been made regarding these communication links that foster Canadian unity.

For instance, the cuts to Radio-Canada or the CBC, the cuts to VIA Rail's network and the cuts to exchange programs have all hindered communication and contacts between regions. That communication and those contacts are vital. It is so important to see Quebeckers go to British Columbia. Some members in this House have never visited British Columbia. It is really important to see British Columbians go to Quebec, up North and to Acadia.

Over the last 20 years, first under the Liberals and then under the Conservatives, we have seen the same thing. There has been nothing but cuts, cuts and more cuts in the creation of communication links here in Canada.

There is much more to do in Ottawa than to cut corporate income taxes. That shows the lack of vision on the part of the Conservatives and the Liberals.

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer, the National Capital Commission; the hon. member for Madawaska—Restigouche, Employment Insurance; the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Darfur.

[Translation]

**Mr. Guy Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with the hon. Secretary of State for Agriculture, the member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

The Canada Labour Code exists to protect the health and safety of workers. The Code was never designed or intended to be used as political leverage. A number of businesses under federal jurisdiction now have international plans that require their workers to be bilingual, and francophones can usually work in their first language.

Bloc Québécois members are disconnected from Quebec voters, and can no longer explain why they are always in Ottawa. So they desperately try to find solutions to problems that do not exist.

The Bloc does not understand how things work in Ottawa. This bill would just isolate Quebecers even more. The Bloc is making a big deal about this bill, but the reality is that it will do nothing to improve conditions for Quebec workers.

The Bloc Québécois does not understand that our government promotes French across the country. Our government supports both official languages. We do what is necessary in the interests of minority language communities, and we ensure the vitality of French and English throughout Canada.

In the throne speech, we committed to developing a strategy for the next phase of the Action Plan for Official Languages. Then, in the 2008 budget, we confirmed that commitment.

On March 20, the International Day of La Francophonie, we released Bernard Lord's report on official languages and linguistic duality. This report, like the work of the Standing Committee on Official Languages and of the Commissioner of Official Languages, will help us move forward with the new phase of the Action Plan for Official Languages. The Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages will table this in the spring.

• (1655)

[English]

Since 2006, we have concluded minority language and linguistic duality education agreements with the provinces and territories worth close to \$1 billion over four years and, in budget 2007, we increased funding to official language minority communities in the promotion of linguistic duality by a total of \$30 million over the next two years. In 2007, our government also announced an investment of \$4.5 million to improve access to health care by official language minority communities across Canada.

Our government also recognizes the Québécois as forming a nation within a united Canada. First, our government does recognize the importance of arts and culture in Quebec. Here are some examples: our government announced \$40 million for the Quartier des spectacles de Montréal; we also announced \$120,000 for the festival to promote the Montreal All-Nighter and Celebration of Light; we announced \$2 million in funding for the Festival International de Jazz de Montréal and the Just For Laughs Festival; and, we announced \$550,000 for the 41st edition of the 2008 Quebec City Summer Festival.

We also understand that French is the common language in Quebec. This is why our government was pleased to hear, following the release of the study by the Office québécois de la langue française that 94.9% of francophones throughout Canada use French almost all of the time or regularly. We also learned that allophone foreign workers use French often, as a matter of fact, 63% of the time. This is great news.

We are also very proud of francophones throughout our country. Our government has been quite busy lately on the announcement of funding for francophone communities. Our government was pleased to announce a total of \$102,000 in funding shared by two groups: la

### *Business of Supply*

Fédération des francophones de Saskatoon and the Association jeunesse fransaskoise.

In March, we announced funding of \$1.1 million to help the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française coordinate a cross country tour of Francoforce in close cooperation with la Fédération des communautés francophones et acadiennes du Canada.

On March 28, 2008, our government announced funding of \$946,100 to 10 francophone organizations to pursue activities to promote francophone and Acadian communities in New Brunswick and linguistic duality across Canada.

On that same day, our government also announced funding of over \$3 million to the organizing committee of the 2009 Congrès mondial acadien. A part of the amount came from the Department of Canadian Heritage and another from the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. Thanks to this contribution, thousands of Acadians, francophones and francophiles from across Canada and abroad will have an opportunity to celebrate Acadian culture at the Congrès mondial acadien.

Our government is also looking forward to its role as host of the 12th Sommet de la Francophonie from October 17 to 19, 2008, the year of the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the foundation of Quebec City, one of the oldest cities of the Americas.

As everyone can see, we do support Quebec as well as the French language throughout all of Canada.

Following everything mentioned in this speech, it is hard to understand why the Bloc Québécois is here today defending French language regarding enterprises under federal jurisdiction located in Quebec, an issue that the Bloc never raised before in 17 years of being in this House. The only explanation is that it seems that the Bloc and its leader have run out of arguments to justify why they are in Ottawa.

To be honest, there is a paradox here. Ever since there has been a new government in Ottawa that has respected the abilities of each province, the Bloc has raised a provincial law to interfere in a federal jurisdiction. That is backward. For example, the last census informed us that 75% of new immigrants to Quebec adopted French and almost 95% of the Quebec population is now able to speak French, which has never been seen before.

• (1700)

This is great news but clearly our government is giving concrete results to Quebecers, something the Bloc could never do. Quebecers have told us that they want open federalism based on respect and cooperation and this is exactly what we have been offering them for over two years.

Following recent articles clearly stating that the Bloc Québécois no longer has a reason to be in Ottawa, it is time for that party to re-evaluate its priorities and respect the will of Canadians to support the vitality of both official languages in Canada.

*Business of Supply*

[Translation]

I represent a bilingual riding. The riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry has a very large francophone population. All of my anglophone and francophone constituents get along very well. We are very proud to live in a bilingual environment. In Canada, we are proud to celebrate English and French.

**Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I was very surprised to hear my colleague say that language has no place in the Canada Labour Code. I would like to point out that in terms of workplace safety, it is a definite must to have safety standards posted in the language of the worker. It greatly improves the work conditions and prevents many accidents.

What is more, world renowned specialists, small- and medium-sized businesses and the holder of the research chair at Trois-Rivières, Pierre-André Julien, tell us that the creativity of entrepreneurs is improved and they are more likely to come up with something productive when they are expressing themselves in their own language and culture.

It should be no surprise that the members of the Bloc Québécois want to share this language and allow everyone to work in it. We appreciate anglophones and their language; that has nothing to do with it. However, for us, it is important to keep our language and culture alive. While working as part of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, I saw wonderful initiatives all across Canada, from daycare centres in Vancouver to French health care services. There is something shocking happening in Canada: the people taking the most French courses in western Canada are of Asian origin. They have a vision, they understand.

I have a question for the member. Is French not a necessary evil for the Conservative Party? It cut the court challenges program, which allowed francophone communities to assert and defend themselves. That is not a vision for the future, in our opinion. Before lecturing us, the Conservative Party needs to do its homework.

• (1705)

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc really is a sad sight. It is a pity because they are trying to create problems where there are none. I have just said that 95% of Quebeckers are able to work in their mother tongue. I do not know why the Bloc keeps making much ado about nothing. They are trying to cause problems. At the moment, it is clear that the Bloc is not needed here in this House. They do nothing. They have no power and can do nothing for the people of Quebec. The Conservative government can do things for the people of Quebec. They told us that they wanted an open federalism based on respect and cooperation. That is precisely what we have been providing for more than two years.

The Prime Minister has recognized that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada. The Bloc just wants to tear that country apart. Our government will never let that happen to this wonderful country.

[English]

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow-up on that last question with my hon. colleague. Ever since the Conservative Party has been in government, we have frankly been

committed to working with Quebec in many ways. We recognize Quebeckers and Quebec for the great strengths they bring to Canada.

I wonder if my hon. colleague could comment on the vitality of Quebec's culture and the ways that our government has fulfilled its commitment to Quebec.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House have done a great deal for Quebec. We respect our Quebec colleagues. We respect our Quebec friends.

I would first of all like to thank the hon. member, but I also want to say that this Prime Minister, for the first time ever, recognized “les Québécois comme une nation”.

I was so proud when that happened because my ancestors come from Quebec. That allowed them to be proud of their heritage as I am proud of my heritage.

We have established fiscal balance between Quebec and Ottawa. We have all the provinces on the same fiscal footing. We have tried to do everything possible to welcome this wonderful province of Quebec into the wonderful unity of Canada.

[Translation]

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Secretary of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today as a Quebec Conservative MP. From the very outset of the debate, I noticed an unfortunate tendency on the part of our Bloc colleagues. As usual, when others take a position that is different than theirs, they say all sorts of things about them, which may or may not be appropriate. For example, that say that they have sold out, that they do this or that.

Let us leave behind this demagoguery and bring the debate back to a civilized level.

First, for the benefit of the House, I would like to introduce an editorial that is worth reading. It was written on October 13, 2007, by Mr. André Pratte, the editor-in-chief of *La Presse*.

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

• (1710)

**Hon. Christian Paradis:** Mr. Speaker, you see, they are laughing again.

We will place this editorial on file, because it really is worth reading. I hope that, instead of laughing, they will think carefully about this debate for once.

The editorial is called “À la recherche de la crise perdue”, which means “in search of the lost crisis”.

Deprived of the arguments that have aided his cause in recent years—sponsorships, fiscal imbalance—[the leader of the Bloc Québécois] has set about stirring up a new crisis to help his party get back on its feet again. In two speeches this week, the leader of the Bloc Québécois has called for the elimination of federal spending power (i.e. the emasculation of the federal government) and the application of Bill 101 to the federal government (i.e. abandoning bilingualism in federal offices in Quebec). These tactics are so crude, they are laughable. [The leader of the Bloc Québécois] knows that even the federal government the most open to the reality in Quebec would refuse such demands. When the Conservatives say no, he will start rending his garments again, something at which the Bloc are second to none.

*Business of Supply*

The sovereigntist leaders were told by the party faithful that they had been wrong to abandon identity issues, so they are bringing them back with a vengeance. What could be better than rousing Quebecers' linguistic insecurity? That is what [the leader of the Bloc Québécois] did when he painted a black picture of a language situation that greatly benefits French. For example, the Bloc leader claimed that "language transfers always benefit English for the most part", neglecting to mention that the situation is improving every year (the Office québécois de la langue française talks about "considerable progress"). "For too many francophones in Quebec, the language of work remains English", [the leader of the Bloc Québécois] also complained. What does he mean by "too many", when we know that 93% of francophone Quebecers work mainly in French?

With such a damning description of the situation of French, all it takes to get people upset is to blame the federal government, which the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie obviously hastened to do: "One of the main reasons for this is the Canadian government's stubborn refusal to recognize Bill 101 in Quebec".

[The leader of the Bloc Québécois] will demand that the government [of the Prime Minister] amend the Official Languages Act to make federal organizations in Quebec subject to Bill 101. Federal offices in Quebec would therefore have signage in French only (or French would have to be dominant) and would no longer be required to provide services in English. In other words, [the leader of the Bloc Québécois] wants to force the Government of Canada to become unilingual!

Clearly, this is a demand Ottawa will never give in to. Not because Ottawa does not recognize the primacy of the French language in Quebec, but because in the rest of the country there would be a backlash that would ultimately spell the end of official bilingualism. For francophones outside Quebec, it would be the beginning of the end.

[The leader of the Bloc Québécois] thinks he has the confrontation he is looking for. But Quebecers will not be fooled. They know a real crisis from a melodrama, a reasonable demand from a con job.

This editorial reflects what many Quebecers are thinking, even though the Bloc Québécois does not want to admit it. This has to be taken into account in a debate that the Bloc members want to hold seriously and respectfully. The least they could do would be to consider these arguments, which are powerful, to say the least.

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this is a nice way to waste 10 minutes and to show a lack of respect for speeches and debate. If the member had at least the decency to provide a single original idea to contribute to this debate and to talk about the Quebec nation, we would be quite happy. However, when you are part of a government who dictates to its members what they must say, original ideas cannot come up.

I regret, but I think that the member should try again and be worthy of his nation, the Quebec nation.

**Hon. Christian Paradis:** Mr. Speaker, what a useless comment! How does this help us with the debate? Frankly, the member should do her own share of soul searching. We are bringing forward new ideas to contribute to a very serious debate. We discuss the Quebec nation. We try to apply the concept in all kinds of way.

These people are looking for a reason to justify their existence. In fact, last weekend, a crisis in that party became obvious. We are not making it up. They wrote it themselves in the *Journal de Montréal*.

The member stands up, looks indignant and expresses senseless and demagogic ideas, as usual. Unfortunately, none of that will help with the debate.

I encourage the member to try to be more interesting next time.

[English]

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the supply proceedings now before the House.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Deputy Speaker:** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Call in the members.

● (1740)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 78)

## YEAS

## Members

André	Angus
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Barbot
Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bellavance
Bevington	Bigras
Black	Blais
Bonsant	Bouchard
Bourgeois	Brunelle
Cardin	Charlton
Christopherson	Comartin
Crête	Crowder
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	DeBellefeuille
Demers	Deschamps
Dewar	Duceppe
Freeman	Gagnon
Gaudet	Godin
Gravel	Guimond
Julian	Laforest
Laframboise	Lalonde
Lavallée	Layton
Lemay	Lessard
Lévesque	Lussier
Malo	Marston
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
McDonough	Ménard (Hochelaga)
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Mourani
Mulcair	Nash
Ouellet	Paquette
Perron	Picard
Plamondon	Priddy
Roy	Savoie
Siksay	St-Hilaire
Stoffler	Thi Lac
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Vincent	
Wasylycia-Leis— 71	

## NAYS

## Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Albrecht	Alghabra
Allen	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Arthur

*Private Members' Business*

Bagnell  
Baird  
Bélangier  
Bennett  
Bevilacqua  
Blackburn  
Boshcoff  
Breitkreuz  
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
Bruinooge  
Calkins  
Cannis  
Carrie  
Chong  
Clement  
Comuzzi  
Cullen (Etobicoke North)  
Cuzner  
Davidson  
Del Mastro  
Dhalliwal  
Dion  
Dryden  
Easter  
Epp  
Fast  
Fitzpatrick  
Fletcher  
Fry  
Godfrey  
Goodale  
Gourde  
Guergis  
Hanger  
Harvey  
Hearn  
Hill  
Hubbard  
Jaffer  
Jennings  
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)  
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)  
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
Kram (Prince Edward—Hastings)  
Lauzon  
LeBlanc  
Lemieux  
Lunn  
MacAulay  
Malhi  
Manning  
Matthews  
McGuinty  
McTeague  
Merrifield  
Mills  
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)  
Moore (Fundy Royal)  
Murphy (Charlottetown)  
Neville  
Norlock  
Obhrai  
Pacetti  
Petry  
Petit  
Prentice  
Proulx  
Rajotte  
Redman  
Reid  
Ritz  
Rota  
Savage  
Scheer  
Sgro  
Silva  
Skelton  
Solberg  
St. Amand  
Stanton  
Storseth  
Sweet  
Temelkovski  
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)

Bains  
Barnes  
Bell (North Vancouver)  
Benoit  
Bezan  
Blaney  
Boucher  
Brown (Oakville)  
Brown (Barrie)  
Byrne  
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)  
Cannon (Pontiac)  
Casson  
Clarke  
Coderre  
Cotler  
Cummins  
D'Amours  
Day  
Devolin  
Dhalla  
Dosanjh  
Dykstra  
Emerson  
Eyking  
Finley  
Flaherty  
Folco  
Gallant  
Goldring  
Goodyear  
Guarnieri  
Hall Findlay  
Harris  
Hawn  
Hiebert  
Hinton  
Ignatieff  
Jean  
Kadis  
Karetak-Lindell  
Keeper  
Khan  
Lake  
Lebel  
Lee  
Lukiwski  
Lunney  
MacKenzie  
Maloney  
Mark  
McCallum  
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)  
Menzies  
Miller  
Minna  
Murray  
Nicholson  
O'Connor  
Oda  
Paradis  
Pearson  
Poilievre  
Preston  
Rae  
Ratansi  
Regan  
Richardson  
Rodriguez  
Russell  
Scarpaleggia  
Schellenberger  
Shipley  
Simard  
Smith  
Sorenson  
St. Denis  
Steckle  
Strahl  
Szabo  
Thibault (West Nova)  
Thompson (Wild Rose)

Tilson  
Tonks  
Turner  
Valley  
Van Loan  
Verner  
Wallace  
Warkentin  
Wilfert  
Wilson  
Yelich

Toews  
Trost  
Tweed  
Van Kesteren  
Vellacott  
Volpe  
Warawa  
Watson  
Williams  
Wrzesnewskyj  
Zed- — 198

## PAIRED

## Members

Batters  
Doyle  
Grewal  
Komarnicki  
Nadeau

Carrier  
Faille  
Guay  
Mayes  
St-Cyr- — 10

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion lost.

[*English*]

It being 5:45 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

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**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

● (1745)

[*English*]

**COURT CHALLENGES PROGRAM**

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.)** moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should immediately and fully restore the Court Challenges Program to enhance the access that every person in Canada, regardless of wealth, should have to the protection of their Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call on the government to fully restore the court challenges program to ensure all Canadians are able to access the protections of their Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

[*Translation*]

Without any prior warning or consultation, the government decided in September 2006 to cancel the court challenges program because it was allegedly inefficient and too costly.

Was the court challenges program really inefficient and costly? False. An independent study conducted in 2002-03 confirmed the value and importance of this program for Canadians. Its value and importance were also confirmed by countless testimonies and the program's strong record on protecting the rights of disadvantaged Canadians and linguistic minorities.

Just think about the Montfort Hospital, the only francophone hospital in Ontario which, in the 1990s, survived efforts made by the Harris government to close it down. Ms. Gisèle Lalonde, former chair of SOS Montfort, said, "Without the court challenges program, [...] we wouldn't be where we are now."

The Minister of the Environment, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Finance were all part of the Harris government. Thanks to the court challenges program, they lost the battle to close down the Montfort Hospital. A few months after forming the federal government, they joined forces with the current Prime Minister who had also lost a court case against a beneficiary of the program. They managed to get the court challenges program out of their way. It is the Minister of the Environment himself who announced the cancellation of the program. That was a vendetta.

Here is what Ms. Lalonde said after the announcement, "What the Harper government is asking us to accept, however, exceeds in its deceit what any other government may have done in the past. This is not just a matter of cutting expenses. The [...] government is depriving the most vulnerable in our society of access to justice system."

The government may have cancelled the court challenges program but it could not erase its remarkable achievements. The program helped confirm that Canadians accused of a crime can have a trial in their own language and it helped reaffirm the right of official language minority groups to manage their own school boards and to higher education in their mother tongue.

[English]

The court challenges program helped homosexual couples achieve equality protection, allowing them to secure spousal benefits and paving the way on same sex marriage.

The program helped seniors secure employment insurance benefits, helped women win pay equity cases and helped disabled groups fight VIA Rail for the right to accessible trains.

Because of the court challenges program, the religious freedom of Sikh Canadians has been confirmed, deaf persons have the right to receive sign language service in hospitals and aboriginal Canadians living off reserve have the right to vote in band elections.

These certainly sound like results to me, as I am sure they do to most Canadians. They fly in the face of the government's suggestion that lawyers were the primary beneficiaries of the court challenges program.

In an attempt to defend the government's decision to cancel the program, the hon. member for Ottawa West—Nepean suggested that it made no sense for the government to support a program designed to help groups challenge its laws. Any government afraid to have its laws challenged in court ought to take a second look at the soundness of those laws. Regardless, the court challenges program was not about who wins and who loses. It was about ensuring that the justice system was accessible.

● (1750)

[Translation]

In 1982, Pierre Elliott Trudeau and Jean Chrétien, who were then the prime minister and the justice minister, ratified the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In so doing, they were enshrining in the laws of our country the values of diversity, tolerance, freedom and justice. They made equality under the law the keystone of our democracy.

### *Private Members' Business*

The court challenges program that had been created to help define linguistic rights was broadened further to the enactment of the Charter in order to help those who were trying to defend their right to equality. The court challenges program strengthened the Charter. This program ensured that the cost of a lawsuit would no longer deter those who wanted to fight for their rights. It gave practical expression to the principle of equality promised by the Charter.

But today, because of decisions made by this government, the Charter has been weakened and is now out of reach for too many Canadians. The termination of this program, that was after all not so expensive at only \$5.6 million a year, has meant that even middle class Canadians cannot turn to the courts anymore.

Yet, there are still a good number of battles to fight, and rights to win. The court challenges program is still needed. Between April and September of 2006, 61 funding applications were submitted. The majority of these applications dealt with the rights of aboriginal Canadians, of ethnocultural minorities, of disabled persons and of women. This suggests that inequalities still exist in our society for these groups and that solutions have to be found.

[English]

Therefore, we find ourselves at a crossroads. If we want to keep the power of the charter in the hands of individual Canadians, if we want to continue, as the charter instructs us to, to strive as a country for the highest possible achievement, building a country in which the rights of every Canadian are equally respected, then we must restore the court challenges program. If we do not, accessing the charter will become the exclusive privilege of the wealthy in our country, and its promise of equal treatment will be broken.

Leading Canadian non-governmental organizations and individuals across the country have spoken against the government's actions.

Bonnie Morton of the charter committee on poverty issues has called the cancellation of the court challenges program "an attack on the Charter itself and the human rights of everyone in Canada". She has said:

If [Canadians] cannot ensure respect of their rights because of financial barriers, Canada's constitutional democracy is hollow. We turn the Charter into a paper guarantee, with no real meaning.

Yvonne Peters of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities has explained:

Without the Court Challenges Program, Canada's constitutional rights are real only for the wealthy. This offends basic fairness. And it does not comply with the rule of law, which is a fundamental principle of our Constitution.

● (1755)

[Translation]

Author and journalist Michel Gratton said:

It is illegal and unconstitutional for a government to encourage assimilation.

Franco-Ontarian Michel Gratton was also the press secretary to former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney.

The Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada is taking the government to court in an attempt to restore the court challenges program.

Jean-Guy Rioux of the association stated:

*Private Members' Business*

Cancellation of the program shows a serious lack of respect for francophone Canadians living outside Quebec, for anglophone Canadians living in Quebec and for all Canadians who may need the protection of their government to assert their rights.

Even the Commissioner of Official Languages, Graham Fraser, has joined the throng calling for the court challenges program to be re-established. These voices can no longer be silenced. The government must respond by restoring the court challenges program so that all Canadians may continue to have access to the protection guaranteed by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

[*English*]

Last year Canada celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Events that took place across the country recognized that the charter was more than just a legal document. It has helped us become one of the most successful multicultural, bilingual federations on the face of the planet. It articulates our shared identity by reminding us and by tell the world where we want to go as a nation. It is a vision of for what our country can and must strive.

I am immensely proud to lead the party that secured the charter for Canadians. I think every Canadian prime minister ought to make a point of publicly celebrating the charter, but last year the government made the decision not to. It decided not to celebrate this integral part of our Canadian identity.

We need the court challenges program today for the same reasons we needed to enshrine the charter in law almost 26 years ago. Legislatures are not perfect. Despite their best efforts to uphold our fundamental Canadian values, parliamentarians sometimes make mistakes. When they do, they need the charter to be accessible to all Canadians so it can guide us back to the vision we all share of building a better Canada.

In 1992 the Mulroney government cancelled the court challenges program. When we Liberals came back in government, we restored the court challenges program. Now we have watched the Conservatives cancel it again. It seems they have failed to learn from their mistakes. If they do not reinstate the program, then the next Liberal government will again, and this time we will double its funding.

● (1800)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary for Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in as much as the dispute between the FCFA and the government has been under consideration by Judge Martineau of the Federal Court since February 26, it would be inappropriate to make any comment whatsoever about this case.

Furthermore, the government has clearly stated its position with regard to the lawsuit in its written representations to the court.

The Government of Canada will honour all undertakings it has made within the framework of the court challenges program up until September 25, 2006 until all available avenues have been exhausted, including appeals to the Supreme Court of Canada.

[*English*]

The government has a responsibility to the people of Canada to set priorities and to ensure that every dollar paid in taxes is used in the

most effective way in the interests of all Canadians. Taxpayers' hard-earned dollars should be spent on programs that get the most relevant results for Canadians.

Our government is pursuing efforts that support community participation as well as individual contributions and respect for all. This debate provides me the opportunity to highlight some of the truly great initiatives of our government.

For example, through the Department of Canadian Heritage's multiculturalism program, the government supports measures that help ethnocultural communities respond to the challenges they face. We fund projects that recognize the value of our diversity and address issues facing cultural communities.

There is also the issue and challenge of foreign credential recognition. Labour market access is a crucial factor in integrating ethnocultural communities. Our government recognizes that people with foreign credentials too often encounter closed doors. We are committed to doing everything we can to help open those doors for those who face barriers.

That is why we are funding projects which take action to address labour market access issues. This will allow new Canadians the ability to begin the qualification process and to search for employment that uses their talents, skills and experience.

The new labour markets agreement committed \$3 billion over six years in labour market investments that are expanding training opportunities for those not eligible under employment insurance. As well, our government has cut the right of permanent residence fee in half and more than \$300 million has been budgeted for additional immigration settlement measures.

As for official language minority communities, we have allocated an additional \$30 million in funding over two years in budget 2007 to promote the greater use of minority official languages in the daily lives of Canadians in official language minority communities.

I would like to highlight that the Liberal leader and all of his deputies voted against budget 2007 and, therefore, voted against this additional \$30 million for official language minority communities. They should hang their heads in shame.

Our commitment to official languages was also reaffirmed in budget 2008 and we are set to announce the next phase of the action plan on official languages this spring. Once again, the very few Liberals who bothered to vote regarding budget 2008 voted against it and, therefore, voted against the follow-on phase of the action plan for official languages. They should hang their heads even lower in shame.

Our government also introduced a bill to amend the Criminal Code, Bill C-13, which increases access to the courts in either official language in criminal cases.

*Private Members' Business*

[Translation]

Our government has made a firm commitment to official language minority communities and to the promotion of English and French in Canada and we have shown this through our actions.

[English]

Our government is also investing in programs that help Canadians with disabilities develop their skills and participate fully in society.

[Translation]

With regard to women, our government has increased the women's program budget to \$20 million this year—which is an increase of 66% and the highest level ever. As for all approved projects resulting from a second call for proposals, 47% came from groups which had never before received financing from Status of Women Canada.

Also, as mentioned in budget 2008, our government will move forward with a plan of action to improve women's equality in Canada, and more specifically by improving their economic and social conditions and their participation in democratic life.

Our government is focusing on two key issues of concern to vulnerable women: security and economic prosperity; health and the elimination of all forms of violence.

• (1805)

[English]

Through initiatives such as these, we are strengthening and providing Canadians with tools that will make a real difference in their lives today and in the near future. In this way, we will make our society more equitable, open and prosperous for all Canadians, regardless of language, religion, cultural background or any other defining characteristic.

We have to make choices, often very difficult choices, regarding how best to serve our fellow citizens. As our government contemplates these choices, Canadians can rest assured that our decisions are not made lightly. When it comes to spending limited taxpayer dollars, we will always choose to make a positive difference in people's lives.

[Translation]

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the opposition leader. I wish I could have congratulated him on two counts—once for the motion he tabled today—but I cannot congratulate him on voting against the Bloc Québécois motion, which was also about language rights. Well, one out of two is better than nothing.

The Bloc Québécois has always been extremely supportive of the court challenges program. My former colleague from Saint-Lambert, Maka Kotto, put forward a motion in the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage to study the issue. I believe that our official languages critic, the member for Gatineau, together with the member for Acadie—Bathurst, also put forward a motion to clarify that pretty unbelievable decision. Such a lack of awareness is unimaginable. How can anyone be that heartless, apathetic, intolerant and out of touch with the needs of official language minority communities?

Philosopher and writer Paul Valéry said that the greatness of a civilization is measured in its treatment of minorities. This

government's record on that score is abysmal. One of the first things it did was abolish a program with a proven track record. In the early 1980s and again in 2003, independent experts—not people from Heritage Canada or the Department of Justice or the Official Languages Secretariat—evaluated the program and found that the cost-benefit ratio, that is, the investment of public dollars relative to the benefit obtained, justified keeping the court challenges program, which, I would note, cost about \$5.6 million per year.

Imagine how heartless, how lacking in compassion for minorities one would have to be to cut that program. And then the Prime Minister stands up in this House and says that his government will not introduce unconstitutional legislation. How unworthy of a government leader. That a government leader can be that irresponsible is beyond anyone's comprehension for two reasons.

First, it is not because a government believes that an act is constitutional that it will not be invalidated by the courts. I know that when a Memorandum to Cabinet is presented, the Minister of Justice must sign a legal document indicating that the act in question is constitutional, according to the officers and lawyers of his department. That goes without saying, and it is the same with regulations.

However, as we all know, certain acts have been declared unconstitutional because the legal system evolves. A provision can be interpreted in a certain way in 1993, and in a different way in 2003.

Let us consider, for example, the tobacco regulations. I was a member of the House of Commons when the Minister of Health at the time, the current member for Sudbury, tabled the regulations. Of course, when she was defending the provisions for plain-packaged cigarettes, she thought the regulations were constitutional. However, that did not stop the Supreme Court from invalidating part of the regulations.

Second, part of the role of the court challenges program is to establish test cases that will advance the rights of certain minority groups.

Let me give another example.

• (1810)

I was a member of this House back in 1995. I may have a baby face, but I have been sitting in this House for 14 years. I am one of the deans of the House and have much experience, despite my young age.

Back then, the government refused to recognize civil marriage rights for same-sex couples. I tabled a motion that was ultimately defeated. I remember clearly that Mr. Alfonso Gagliano was government whip back then, and that, in an unprecedented move, he had called a vote on a Monday morning. I have only once voted on a Monday morning, and it was on my motion to recognize civil marriage rights for same-sex common-law partners. All the Liberal ministers refused to show up to vote, all but one who, let it be said, was quite brave in her day. It was Sheila Copps, the member for LaSalle—Émard's good friend.

*Private Members' Business*

In 1994, any challenge to a law extending civil marriage rights to same-sex couples would have surely succeeded. Yet, in 2005, the Supreme Court of Canada recognized civil marriage rights for same sex couples.

Therefore, a government cannot maintain that it will never bring in unconstitutional legislation, because one never knows how the law will evolve. Indeed, it is the role of the Supreme Court of Canada, and of provincial courts of appeal, to shape the law. That is why the judicial and the legislative branches must interact, so that new law may emerge and that we may influence each other, while still, of course, respecting the autonomy of the courts and the autonomy of parliamentarians.

Without the court challenges program, some battles fought by communities would not have been possible. When people go to court, hundreds of thousands of dollars may be at stake. In the case of the Montfort Hospital, everyone is aware of the courage displayed by Ms. Lalonde, and everyone remembers that the “very conservative” government of Mike Harris was to Ontario what *Jurassic Park* was to cinema. We are well aware of the fact that the Mike Harris government wanted to deprive the francophone community of access to health care services in French, and had it not been for the public funding of the Montfort Hospital, that facility would have been closed.

We should remember that some current ministers were member of Mike Harris' cabinet, and I am thinking, among others, of the Minister of the Environment who, as we know, performed very poorly as a minister. The current Minister of Finance was also a member of Mike Harris' government.

As we can see, this despicable right wing conservative party has a score to settle with collective rights, and it does so by targeting a tool that has enabled minorities to make considerable progress. This is beginning to look like a vendetta against the court challenges program. Shame on the government! I hope that minorities will remember this insensitive government, which treats them with contempt.

I mentioned the case of the Montfort Hospital, but I could also give the example of handicapped people. We are well aware that it is not easy to structure public services for handicapped people. This situation has made it necessary to organize court challenges that have allowed these people to see their situation improve.

So, I say shame on the government. May voters ensure that this despicable government never gets a majority. They can count on the Bloc Québécois to see that this never happens.

• (1815)

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this motion presented by the leader of the Liberal Party regarding the court challenges program. In the last part of his speech, he said that if the Liberals are elected, they would double the funding. I hope this does not mean that they will double their efforts to break the law governing minority rights.

The court challenges program served minorities across the country. Whether to tackle the problems facing official language minorities, that is, anglophones in Quebec or francophones in the

rest of Canada, or problems facing gay and lesbian people, women's groups or aboriginal groups, everyone used the court challenges program to be able to fight in court and see justice served.

As our Bloc Québécois colleague just mentioned, the court challenges program was important for minorities that won cases they never could have won otherwise. As we have seen, it is not just large organizations with a lot of money that can fight in court and win. We saw the example of Ms. Lalonde, president of SOS Montfort, with all the work that was involved. She even told the Standing Committee on Official Languages that it was the \$75,000 received from the court challenges program that in the end helped SOS Montfort win its case.

But the Conservatives suddenly cancelled the court challenges program. I thought that was despicable. Furthermore, they said they could not accept the fact that they were giving money to people who were fighting the government in court. The Minister of the Environment said so right here in the House of Commons. As my Bloc colleague was saying, that same minister was part of the government of Mike Harris, who wanted to close the Montfort Hospital. These are the same people. There is also the Minister of Finance, as I already mentioned in my speech concerning a report on court challenges by the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

It is even worse than that. We have seen what has happened in Fredericton, not so long ago. Mr. Doucet of l'Université de Moncton defended a case. The government not only went to court to prove that it had the right to cut the court challenges program, but it even said to the judge that if it won the case, it wanted the community to pay. The government wanted the people who took it to court to assume all the expenses. It was not enough to say that it would no longer support the organizations wanting to seek justice before the courts, it wanted to ask the judge to make them pay all the legal costs.

In court, it was interesting to hear the argument of the Conservative government. Its representatives told the judge that it was up to the government itself to decide how to spend its money for the minorities, not to the court. They added that if people were not happy, they should not vote for them. It was inconceivable. The Conservatives told the judge that, in Ottawa, they were the ones making the laws and that if they violated them, people only had to wait four years to kick them out and seek justice. They even said to the court that it should not exist in Canada. In my opinion, it was insulting for the Canadian justice system. It really was an insult to the court, in Fredericton.

We need only think of Ms. Paulin who was arrested by the RCMP in Fredericton. She fought her ticket, which was in English only, and argued that she was unable to obtain service in French in the only officially bilingual province in Canada. The RCMP is a federal police force though. When Ms. Paulin challenged the way she was treated by the RCMP, the federal government said it was a provincial not a federal matter. The case went to court once again. The federal government said that the RCMP was indeed involved, but that it was providing its services to the province of New Brunswick. The government could therefore violate New Brunswick law because the province was paying the RCMP.

*Private Members' Business*

•(1820)

The RCMP is the symbol of the federal government and of Canada. If it is paid by the province, it has the right to contravene the law and we do not get involved.

The case went to court once again and we waited for an answer. Finally an agreement was reached. The RCMP was to respect New Brunswick's law and provide services in both languages.

The court challenges program helped settle this case. Without it, Ms. Paulin of Tracadie-Sheila would never have been able to afford to go to court. These negotiations would never have taken place and the agreement with New Brunswick to respect both its official languages would not have come about.

We should take a look at the cases that have been won. There are those involving women, for example. Women went to court as a minority that did not obtain justice. They won their case. So did the First Nations. There was the case of the disabled who wanted to board a CN train that was not accessible. They too used this program. There are many such cases.

If we do not give our minorities the possibility to have the law enforced, if the government says that it will deprive us of the main tool that can help us get justice done, we are heading the wrong way. That important program got \$5.6 million. It has been an important program for the minority groups in Canada, namely for PEI and Nova Scotia schools.

Earlier, I talked about the RCMP in New Brunswick. We could talk about a lot of things that happened in that province.

Consider for example the Ontario schools. When I went to Sudbury as part of a national tour on official languages, people said that it was thanks to the court challenge program that they got the right to study in their own language. I am thinking here about the Collège Boréal in Sudbury. It is through battles fought by the French languages organizations with the help of the court challenge program that they finally won their case and that they finally can get the services in their language. The same thing happened in Manitoba, B.C., Saskatchewan and Alberta, that is everywhere we went.

There is something regrettable in all of this. Earlier the Parliamentary Secretary for Official Languages was talking about the federal government's action plan, but he did not say that the government's action plan had expired on March 31. Today is April 1. The action plan is no longer in effect. It has expired. And yet, the government is giving no indication of what it is going to do about it.

The Conservative parliamentary secretary did not say that no money was allocated in the budget for the action plan. He said that money would come later, as though minorities were not important. The government's action plan and the money will come later. The government had to hire Bernard Lord, the former Premier of New Brunswick, to conduct a study behind closed doors when the parliamentary committee had already done all the work. The parliamentary committee had already travelled across Canada and reported to the House and the minister. The minister already knew everything Bernard Lord presented.

However, Bernard Lord did not say in his report that when he met with Canadians from across the country behind closed doors, that the

communities told him that the court challenges program should be reinstated. He did not talk about that at all in his report. He was mum on the whole matter of the court challenges program.

However, when members of the Standing Committee on Official Languages toured the country, all the agencies told us that the top priority was the court challenges program, which provides the means to go to court and seek justice. The linguistic rights we have achieved in Canada were granted by the courts. It was not the government who granted those rights; it was not the Liberal government who granted them to us. The legislation was there, it was violated, and the judges provided us justice. For all those reasons, we are supporting this motion.

•(1825)

We hope the government will see reason one day and understand that it has taken away the ultimate tool from minorities. Whether we are talking about official languages, women's rights or aboriginal rights, every minority in Canada has been affected. This is a loss for Canada and the court challenges program should be reinstated.

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I participate in tonight's debate and rise in favour of the motion of my leader, the Leader of the Opposition, on the Conservative government's wrong-headed decision to eliminate the court challenges program.

I was very happy to hear what my colleague from Acadie—Bathurst had to say. I think he quite nicely summed up the situation in our province, New-Brunswick, and emphasized the importance of that program. The member from Hochelaga also spoke, a few minutes ago, of the importance of the program with regards to protecting minority groups across the country.

We have often asked ourselves why a government who had just boasted about having a 13 billion dollar surplus would announce budget cuts only days later. They slashed literacy programs, which has had a very negative effect on many communities in my riding, and killed the court challenges program for what we believe to be purely ideological reasons.

The question of access to justice for minorities such as the Acadians whom I proudly represent in this House, whether it be courts of first instance or the Supreme Court of Canada, has always been important.

As other colleagues have so well noted, this concerns not only the Acadians I represent or the francophone minorities that had to use the court challenges program to assert their rights, but also minorities and other groups all across Canada whose rights are sometimes restricted by a bill that a government or a Parliament passed without realizing its impact on a freedom or a right enshrined in our Constitution.

*Private Members' Business*

[English]

We have asked ourselves many times why a government, with large budgetary surpluses, would decide to abolish a program as important as the court challenges program but also a program that represented such a small expenditure, and there is no credible explanation. That is why, when the Minister of the Environment, the former president of the treasury board, talked about budgetary restrictions and good fiscal management, and the parliamentary secretary even tried to pretend that same argument a few minutes ago, it simply does not hold water.

To simply cut a program as modest financially and fiscally as was the court challenges program and claim that it was about good fiscal management simply does not make sense. What that was about was an ideology of the Conservative Party, something that had been written about, for example, by people like the Prime Minister's current chief of staff. They, for a long time, have believed that only certain voices should be heard in our courts and only certain groups should have access to the courts as a way to advance their rights.

The cost of litigation can be prohibitive. If it is even bringing a motion or filing an application before a trial division court, it can cost many thousands of dollars for an individual or a group to simply get to the first level of our court process. Ultimately, when an important constitutional or charter right is to be decided, it is often at the Supreme Court of Canada where that decision is made in a way that then binds the lower courts and binds Parliament in a way that cannot be changed.

By the time a case reaches the Supreme Court of Canada, it takes many years to finally be adjudicated upon and decided but it also costs, in many cases, hundreds of thousands of dollars. The government cynically claimed that while it was lawyers who benefited from the court challenges program, that is a rather dismissive and unfortunate attitude to take when a program had done so much to help so many millions of vulnerable Canadians assert their rights before the highest courts of the land.

We have a government that has no belief in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We have a government that does not believe that the judiciary should in fact have the right and the obligation to examine acts of government and legislation passed by this House as it stands up to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and to other constitutional provisions.

Unfortunately, that was decided by Parliament 26 years ago. Mr. Speaker, you were in the House at the time when that important constitutional amendment took place, the Patriation Act, the adoption of the charter. It was a very proud moment, I am sure, for all parliamentarians who sat in the House on that day. I know my father, who sat with you, Mr. Speaker, in the House in those days in the 1980s, often told us that one of his proudest moments as a member were those historic debates and those important votes where a Liberal government, with the support of the New Democrats at the time, advanced the rights and the institutions of democracy in a way that no previous Parliament had been able to do.

We now have a government that has never fully accepted in Canada that there is a role for the judiciary in the adjudication of rights. That is why we have seen bizarre examples where it will seek

to load up committees to review lawyers' applications as to whether they are qualified to sit on the bench. That can only be done for ideological reasons.

● (1830)

[Translation]

As I have already said a few minutes ago, we strongly believe that the court challenges program did a great deal to support minority language communities across the country, not just francophones in a minority situation outside Quebec, but also Quebec anglophones.

I have the privilege to be the desk mate of the hon. member for Saint Boniface, Manitoba. This is your province, Mr. Speaker. That hon. member has often spoken to me of the importance of this program and of the contribution that the cases brought before the courts, with the help of the court challenges program, made to education in French in Manitoba.

There were some jurists from New Brunswick at the time. My colleague for Acadie—Bathurst referred to Michel Doucet, who went to Manitoba to support the Franco-Manitobans, to encourage them not to give up and to advance their case before the courts, which moreover eventually gave the francophones of Manitoba far more rights.

One wonders why the government would decide one day to do away with this program. The only reason can be that we have a government that does not believe in the Charter of Rights, that does not have much interest in backing minorities in Canada, and that is worried that some day a judge, or the Supreme Court of Canada, is going to give equality rights to same sex couples, for example.

We have seen historical court and appeal court decisions on equality rights for same sex couples regarding civil marriage. We found that to be a wholly appropriate expenditure for a court challenges program to support Canadians in standing up for their rights and claiming what has been their due for a very long time.

In an open and pluralistic society, where some inequalities still remain, a program like the court challenges program is essential. A few minutes ago I was proud to hear my leader made a commitment on behalf of our party and say that a future Liberal government will not only reinstate the court challenges program, but will also increase available funding because this was a modest program with a huge demand on it. Increasing and improving its budget will surely be of help to minority communities and others, be they women's groups or parents of disabled children.

● (1835)

[English]

We are hopeful the government will come to accept the will of Parliament. When the Prime Minister was leader of the opposition he spoke often about the importance of the government respecting the will of Parliament. I hope we have a vote in the House that will encourage and call upon the government at one point to do the right thing. We have a bizarre situation where the government insists on abandoning a program that has in fact done a great deal of good.

This is an important debate and I am glad my colleagues have had a chance to speak to it. It is a debate that we will continue because in the election campaign Canadians will remember what action the government took with respect to minorities, including the minorities who I represent in my constituency.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired. As the motion has been designated as non-votable, the order is now dropped from the order paper.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*Translation*]

### NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION

**Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the new chair of the National Capital Commission recently spoke publicly in favour of urban development in the national capital region greenbelt. An outcry followed.

As a member from the national capital region, I rose in this House to state my opposition. This vision is completely at odds with the legacy left by 1950s visionary Jacques Gréber.

The greenbelt covers more than 20,000 hectares. It is a natural area which houses farms, forests and marshlands, but above all, the greenbelt has symbolic value for Canadians and residents of the national capital region. It represents a place of peace and ecological balance.

The greenbelt was developed to create a capital that reflects its citizens. With its spectacular beauty, the greenbelt welcomes visitors in a natural environment. These green spaces provide an exceptional quality of life for city dwellers. Canada's capital is a modern city, and its citizens are very concerned about environmental management.

Why would anyone want to destroy such a unique and irreplaceable part of our heritage? What could possibly justify that stance? I do not understand why the new NCC president would even say something like that. Of course management of urban and commercial development in the region is a major concern, but even minimal destruction of the greenbelt is not acceptable.

The NCC's mandate is to prepare plans for and assist in the development, conservation and improvement of the national capital region. The NCC has the power to fulfill that mandate. That was the context in which the NCC set about revising the greenbelt master plan.

The NCC faces an enormous challenge in reconciling the region's need for development with its original mandate and mission to plan for the greenbelt. As great as that challenge is, we must preserve the mandate.

The national capital region is home to another jewel: Gatineau Park, a remarkable 30,000-hectare natural preserve. The Gréber plan created Gatineau Park, a protected area that is home to numerous wildlife species. For countless residents and visitors, Gatineau Park

### *Adjournment Proceedings*

is also the site of many recreational activities. Located at the city's doorstep, people enjoy year-round activities in the park.

The region's growing population has resulted in more people visiting the park. Visitors want to take advantage of outdoor activities that contribute to a healthy lifestyle. Increased visitation also puts pressure on Gatineau Park's development plan, because it creates challenges in terms of usage conflicts, preserving natural environments, and controlling access to the park.

The 2005 master plan for Gatineau Park has allowed an update of the vision, the mission and the land planning and use strategies for the park in the coming years. It combines the goal of preserving natural areas and that of using others for recreation and eco-tourism. This is a balanced vision in keeping with the original vision for Gatineau Park and it provides an update on the needs and uses of residents as well as visitors.

There are strong pressures to change the greenbelt and Gatineau Park. Will the Conservatives commit to the present vision and to making it consistent with that of the Gréber plan?

● (1840)

[*English*]

**Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we agree. The national capital greenbelt is a key element of the 1950 Gréber plan that shaped our beautiful capital into what we know and cherish today.

Established in the late 1950s, the greenbelt today consists of 20,000 hectares of land, including farms, forests, wetlands and sites for national research institutions. It is the symbolic expression of rural Canada, of all of Canada, as well as large, ecologically sensitive ecosystems. The greenbelt allows Canadians to experience these very important elements of Canadian geography and society.

This destination for visitors and residents actually attracts more than a million visits per year. Canadians should be very proud of that. I am very proud of that. Today the greenbelt is a unique urban space and is unequalled in any other North American city.

The greenbelt is owned and managed by the National Capital Commission in accordance with strong planning and management tools, such as the 1996 greenbelt master plan.

It is important to note that National Capital Commission chair Mr. Russell Mills said at the first public board meeting, held on November 7, that his comments on the greenbelt, as expressed by my friend, were "stating personal views...and not stating new policy for the NCC".

That said, the government believes that the model of the greenbelt is still relevant for a large urban area like Canada's capital region, like what we have here today.

We have noted, however, in regard to the recommendations from the National Capital Commission mandate review panel, that the 1999 plan for Canada's capital should be subject to approval by the Parliament of Canada.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Second, the panel recommended that properties comprised in the national interest land mass be reassessed through a process involving public consultations, both the public that lives here and all Canadians, because we are proud of the national capital region.

Also, in keeping with the National Capital Commission planning framework, master plans are reviewed every 10 years. As the current master plan is 11 years old, the NCC has also begun its review and evaluation.

While many recommendations from the initial plan have been implemented, some need to be re-examined in light of today's reality. Over the last decade, many factors, such as increased transportation, infrastructure requirements stemming from urban growth, increased fragmentation pressures, and global agricultural issues, reinforce the fact that the plan needs to be updated.

Through the review of the policies, different perspectives from diverse audiences will be collected during any public consultation process. The National Capital Commission is committed to open the dialogue with Canadians to ensure that the vocation of the greenbelt reflects today's reality.

As parliamentary secretary to the minister responsible for the National Capital Commission, I can assure members that the government believes the model of the greenbelt is still relevant for today's capital region.

• (1845)

[Translation]

**Mr. Marcel Proulx:** Mr. Speaker, the greenbelt and Gatineau Park are the lungs of the national capital region. These are also places where we can all enjoy outdoor activities. It would be a mistake, through indirect strategies, to change the mission and the strategies which apply to the greenbelt or to Gatineau Park.

I have in mind a specific piece of legislation, Bill S-227, an Act to amend the National Capital Act. This bill would make the park's ecological integrity a priority and this could mean that other park uses, such as outdoor activities, could be subordinated to ecological integrity. In this regard, people have already stated that they wish to continue using the park for recreational activities.

I will have reason to rejoice when the Conservatives have officially committed to maintaining the territorial integrity of the greenbelt and of Gatineau Park and to maintaining the uses which are presently authorized.

[English]

**Mr. Brian Jean:** Mr. Speaker, I can assure this member that our intention is especially to keep the National Capital Commission in its entire state of today. I came here almost four years ago from northern Alberta and chose a place to live for my work here. I chose to live in Gatineau, as the member knows. I did that because it reminded me of northern Alberta, which is one of the most beautiful places in the world that I have ever seen.

I use the national capital area. I use it for rollerblading and biking, and yes, I use it for the 45 minute wait every day to come across the bridge. It is a very beautiful area. I love it and I can assure the member that it is going to be kept in the best possible way it can be for Canadians.

[Translation]

## EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am rising tonight because of a reply I received from the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development. My question was about the extension of employment insurance by five additional weeks. We knew that the Conservative government was delaying renewing this pilot project. The Minister came back with answers, and since then, as we know, the pilot project has been renewed, but certainly not to the complete satisfaction of workers, for two specific reasons. I will come back to this in a moment.

The reason why we have to work to ensure fairness in the employment insurance system is that in many cases, workers are going through hard times, and not just in the last few months. When seasonal workers lose their jobs, they have to be able to pay for groceries and electricity and make the payment on the house, and so on. These are the basics, and they have to be paid even if a worker loses his or her job. Who are the groups who have the most to lose in this situation? Workers certainly lose a great deal, but family members also stand to lose a lot in these situations.

It is all the more deplorable that since the Conservative government came to power, every time we talk about the pilot projects, it is always about whether it will be renewing them or not. This pilot project, which provided a five-week extension to fill what we call the spring gap, was renewed, but when I asked my question, it had only seven days left to go before it ended.

This is not the first time. Since the Conservatives first came to power in January 2006, we have had to fight and push the government repeatedly to ensure that it restores these pilot projects that are so important for our workers, and as I said a moment ago, are even more crucial for their families. Without these measures, the families would not be able to support themselves.

We must always ask why workers and families have to get down on their knees to the Conservative government to have these pilot projects renewed. At the very least, if it had said, in response to the repeated representations we made, that it was going to restore all these excellent pilot projects that the Liberal government initiated and make them permanent, that would at least have been something accomplished. We would not have to keep coming back to the House of Commons every 12 or 18 months and pressuring the government, to ensure that our workers and their families can get the assistance they need.

These are examples. When I asked my question, there were only seven days left in the pilot project, and the holiday season was about to start. Why is the government always trying to show workers and their families that it is the boss, that it has the key of the coffers and that it will give them money when it pleases? These people need help. They do not need to be told to kneel down in front of the federal government. They need help from the government.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

We should ask ourselves a question — and I will ask the question directly, then continue. To start with, why is the Conservative government always waiting until the last minute to renew pilot projects related to employment insurance? Second, why is the Conservative government not making these pilot projects permanent? Is it because it would like to completely eliminate them one day? Is it leaving the door open so that, when comes renewal time, it would be easy to just delete them?

• (1850)

[English]

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to address the question raised by the hon. member for Madawaska—Restigouche tonight.

As the hon. member is fully aware, the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development announced that the Government of Canada would continue the extended employment insurance benefits pilot project until June 6, 2009. This project increases employment insurance entitlement by providing five additional weeks of benefits to claimants, up to a maximum of 45 weeks.

Seasonal workers asked for this and the government delivered. I would hope that my colleague would be happy with that news. The hon. member should be pleased further with the announcement that both Madawaska—Charlotte and Restigouche—Albert are participating in this very important pilot project.

The economy is booming. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance have created winning conditions so that more jobs, better wages and a brighter future can be delivered to all Canadians.

Under the leadership of this government, the unemployment rate is at its lowest rate in over 30 years and was hitting 5.8% in January. Employment rates are at record highs. Thousands of jobs are being created every day across this country. In fact, more than 700,000 new jobs have been created since this government was elected almost two years ago, including more than 40,000 in February alone.

However, this government recognizes that all regions are not experiencing this same record growth. That is why we introduced the extended EI benefits pilot project to test a mechanism for helping seasonal workers who need our help.

As with all EI pilot projects, it is important to ensure that the proposed mechanism for fixing this problem will actually achieve these goals. Canadians sent this government to Ottawa to restore sound management and fiscal prudence to our country's most important programs, and this government will do no less.

I would like to point out that the hon. member was in the government for almost a decade and a half, most of the time in a majority situation, and his party did nothing for seasonal workers, except that his party overcharged for EI and misspent those dollars on boondoggles and sponsorships.

Now he asks us to support a pilot project that his government did not implement in its 13 years in power even though it was his party that ignored these same workers about whom he speaks tonight. They were ignored for 13 years. Perhaps he has forgotten about his party and its record, but Canadians have not.

This government has a record to be proud of and we are proud of the supports we have provided to all working families. We are proud to say that this Conservative government is providing ever growing opportunities for all Canadians to participate and succeed in Canada's growing economy.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** Mr. Speaker, things should be clear, and I will clarify one thing. That the parliamentary secretary says what she likes in a speech is one thing, but for her to say that pilot projects were not created by the Liberal Party of Canada is untrue. The Liberal Party of Canada set up these pilot projects in the field of unemployment insurance. To say the opposite is simply untrue. She should be ashamed of making such statements in front of Canadian citizens.

Can she answer once and for all? Why do workers have to wait until the last minute for pilot projects to be renewed? Why are the Conservatives not even able to make these pilot projects permanent? Is it because, according to their ideology, they will want one day to eliminate the pilot projects which seasonal workers in my riding and elsewhere in Canada need every day?

She just said that the economy is doing well. I invited many times the Prime Minister to come to my riding to see the crisis we have to deal with, but he refused each time.

• (1855)

[English]

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich:** As the member well knows, Mr. Speaker, we extended that program. So as he said, his question is out of date. When he started, he asked that question. We have delivered.

This government believes that supporting Canadian workers is the right thing to do.

That is why we have invested \$2 billion per year in labour market development agreements with the provinces and territories.

That is why we have invested an additional \$500 million a year in training for workers unable to access employment insurance.

This is why we have committed in the 2008 budget to create the Canada employment insurance financing board to ensure the independent management of EI funds for the benefit of workers and employers.

I want to thank my friend for allowing that budget to pass and finally get some results for Canadians. After 13 years of his party's inaction, we did it.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

[Translation]

## DARFUR

**Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, thanks to this adjournment debate, I have the opportunity to revisit a question that I asked on December 10 regarding Darfur. As we speak, atrocities are being committed over there to which neither I or any other person can remain indifferent.

People from my riding are regularly showing how concerned they are about human rights both here and abroad. It is for their benefit and for the benefit of the people of Darfur that I rise again today on this subject.

In Darfur, soldiers and militia groups rape and kill civilians with, in the case of the Janjaweed, the guilty support of the Sudan government. According to Amnesty International, we are talking about more than 200,000 people killed, more than 2.2 million internally displaced persons and 280,000 refugees. Thousands of women are systematically raped and opponents are tortured.

If we are at war in Afghanistan to ensure human rights, we have to be coherent and intervene elsewhere as well. We have to intervene in Darfur, especially since more and more observers and the American government, among others, say that a real genocide is taking place. If that is the case, Canada and its allies in the international community would have the legal obligation to protect the people of Darfur.

That means we need to prevent conflicts, we need to intervene if there is a conflict and maintain peace by ignoring the sovereignty of a nation such as Sudan because it does not protect its own people.

By looking into this, we learn that since January 2006, through CIDA, Canada has voluntarily contributed \$388 million to peace efforts. I will give members a few figures. This way, I won't have to ask the government to give them to me only to hear it say how extraordinary they are. We have made some voluntary contributions for CIDA, humanitarian aid and early recovery in Sudan, namely \$120 million in terms of humanitarian aid and 45 military advisors in terms of human resources. We have also loaned 105 light armoured vehicles—and I did say “loaned”—to Senegal, Rwanda and Nigeria.

It is really not much, but this meagre contribution compares favourably against the complete lack of leadership showed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs who went to Sudan, but did not achieve any results.

The Darfur crisis must be resolved politically above all, and it is up to the Minister of Foreign Affairs to engage all stakeholders, China included, in seeking the solution. China is a particularly important stakeholder because, as we know, it buys 64% of Sudanese oil and is one of the main arms suppliers to the Sudanese government.

Even if the rebel factions find a common basis for negotiations, there is no indication that the Sudanese government will respect any resulting agreement. China can make a difference by forcing the Sudanese government to respect the peace agreements and peace missions. It must be encouraged to take part in a spirit of cooperation.

Given the urgency of the situation, the public is absolutely entitled to know the Canadian government's strategy as far as the Khartoum regime is concerned. One thing is certain: so far, Darfur really has not seemed to be one of the Conservative government's foreign policy priorities.

I ask again: when is there going to be a change, a real change?

● (1900)

[English]

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the situation prevailing in Sudan and Darfur is of great concern to the Government of Canada. Canada believes there has to be a peaceful solution to the conflict in Darfur, as the member has suggested, a situation which puts in jeopardy the security of so many Darfurians and others.

Last week, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and myself visited Sudan in our official capacity. While there, the Minister of Foreign Affairs announced that Canada would invest \$755 million for Sudan in 2008-09, including assessed contributions across three pillars of activity: security, diplomacy and aid. This builds upon Canada's existing support of peaceful efforts, humanitarian efforts and early recovery in Sudan for which Canada has provided over \$388 million in voluntary contributions since 2006.

What the Minister of Foreign Affairs and myself conveyed to the Sudanese authorities was that better relations with Canada was dependent upon developments with regard to violence in Darfur, the AU-UN mission, UNAMID deployment, human rights and impunity and the implementation of the CEPA agreement.

Now that the AU-UN hybrid operation in Darfur has taken over the African Union's mission responsibilities, Canada will be a very significant financial supporter of UNAMID. This will include up to \$40 million in voluntary support for the enhanced capacity of African troops contributing countries in UNAMID in 2008-09, making us the second largest voluntary financial contributor to the UN-AU hybrid mission.

In addition, Canada is committed to alleviating the suffering of conflict affected populations in Sudan. Since 2006, Canada has provided more than \$102 million in humanitarian assistance. Approximately half of those humanitarian assistance funds have been directed to Darfur.

As I said, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and myself visited Sudan and we went to Darfur. We visited the IDP camps run by the World Food Programme, which gives food to displaced people. There are close to 250,000 displaced people in Darfur.

I was very pleased and happy to see a huge amount of cooking oil donated by Canada. Written in big words were “gift from the people of Canada to the people of Darfur”. Those things make a major difference. That is what Canada is contributing to the humanitarian efforts in Darfur on the ground.

Then the minister and myself visited the UN headquarters, the UNAMID and Canadian Forces. We talked to members of the forces and they told us generally what they needed to help them patrol that area properly.

We have to understand that Sudan is a very complex situation. Nevertheless, Canada is a willing contributor to ensure that the efforts of Canada are spent where there are tangible results. The mission is all about that. That is why, when the foreign affairs minister and myself were in Sudan, we made it clear, in absolute terms, where Canada's money would go and which areas we would support to ensure that there was maximum benefit for the people of Sudan, not only in Darfur but also in southern Sudan.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Louise Thibault:** Mr. Speaker, I shall be very brief with this my last question.

Originally—and the minister's spokesperson will recall, because he must have it right before his eyes—the purpose of my question was to understand why the government had not increased its peace implementation force and made a ten fold increase in its budget for those involved in creating peace by putting themselves at risk. What was keeping him from convincing China to engage in a meaningful dialogue in order to find a real solution?

I appreciate the comments that the spokesperson for the Minister of Foreign Affairs has made this evening, but I would like to hear him tell us what specifically the minister and his staff at Foreign

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Affairs have done directly in their dialogue with China to get it to truly engage in solving this crisis.

● (1905)

[*English*]

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Speaker, as I said, Canada is contributing \$275 million for Sudan in 2008-09.

I do understand the member's concern about using our allies and China to bring peace to Darfur. We have told China that it should be involved in the peaceful efforts in Sudan. I am happy to say that the Chinese have sent in 500 engineers under the UN umbrella to work toward the rebuilding of Sudan. This is the first step that China has taken. We will continue to be in dialogue with China and with all the other partners in south Sudan, Chad, the European Union, and everybody else that has an interest in Sudan.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24 (1).

(The House adjourned at 7:06 p.m.)





## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Immigration

Mr. Dion	4318
Mr. Van Loan	4319
Mr. Dion	4319
Mr. Van Loan	4319
Mr. Dion	4319
Mr. Van Loan	4319
Mr. Ignatieff	4319
Ms. Finley	4319
Mr. Ignatieff	4319
Ms. Finley	4319

### The Quebec Nation

Mr. Duceppe	4319
Mr. Blackburn	4320
Mr. Duceppe	4320
Mr. Blackburn	4320

### Multiculturalism

Mr. Paquette	4320
Ms. Verner	4320
Mr. Paquette	4320
Ms. Verner	4320

### Citizenship and Immigration

Mr. Layton	4320
Mr. Van Loan	4320
Mr. Layton	4321
Mr. Van Loan	4321

### Afghanistan

Mr. Rae	4321
Mr. Bernier	4321
Mr. Rae	4321
Mr. Bernier	4321
Mr. Wilfert	4321
Mr. Bernier	4321
Mr. Wilfert	4321
Mr. Bernier	4321

### Telecommunications

Mrs. Mourani	4322
Ms. Verner	4322
Mrs. Mourani	4322
Ms. Verner	4322

### Seal Hunters

Mr. Blais	4322
Mr. Hearn	4322
Mr. Blais	4322
Mr. Hearn	4322

### Ethics

Mrs. Jennings	4322
Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	4322
Mrs. Jennings	4322
Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	4323

### Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Mr. Dosanjh	4323
Mr. Day	4323

Mr. Dosanjh	4323
Mr. Day	4323

### Space Industry

Mr. Goodyear	4323
Mr. Prentice	4323

### Afghanistan

Ms. Black	4323
Mr. Hawn	4324
Ms. Black	4324
Mr. Hawn	4324

### Seal Hunters

Mr. D'Amours	4324
Mr. Hearn	4324
Mr. D'Amours	4324
Mr. Hearn	4324

### Foreign Affairs

Mr. McTeague	4324
Mr. Bernier	4324
Mr. McTeague	4324
Mr. Bernier	4325

### Food Safety

Ms. Gagnon	4325
Mr. Ritz	4325
Mr. Bellavance	4325
Mr. Ritz	4325

### Housing

Ms. Dhalla	4325
Mr. Solberg	4325

### Aboriginal Affairs

Mr. Manning	4325
Mr. Strahl	4325

### The Environment

Mr. Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	4326
Mr. Baird	4326
Mr. Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	4326
Mr. Baird	4326

### Government Flyers

Mr. Turner	4326
Mr. Van Loan	4326

### The Environment

Mrs. Davidson	4326
Mr. Baird	4326

### Tibet

Ms. Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	4327
Mr. Bernier	4327

### Presence in Gallery

The Speaker	4327
-------------	------

### Point of Order

#### Oral Questions

Mr. Coderre	4327
Mr. Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	4327

<b>Privilege</b>	
<b>Oral Questions</b>	
Ms. Verner .....	4327

### GOVERNMENT ORDERS

<b>Business of Supply</b>	
<b>Opposition motion—Compliance with the Charter of the French Language regarding enterprises under federal jurisdiction located in Quebec</b>	
Motion .....	4327
Mr. Ménard (Hochelaga) .....	4327
Mr. Lévesque .....	4328
Mr. André .....	4329
Ms. Picard .....	4329
Mr. Gourde .....	4330
Mr. André .....	4331
Ms. Bonsant .....	4332
Mrs. Boucher .....	4332
Mr. Bellavance .....	4333
Mr. Mulcair .....	4334
Ms. Bourgeois .....	4334
Mr. André .....	4335
Mr. Ouellet .....	4337
Ms. Bonsant .....	4337
Mr. Julian .....	4337
Mr. Ouellet .....	4339
Mr. Allison .....	4340
Mr. Atamanenko .....	4340

Mr. Lauzon .....	4340
Ms. Brunelle .....	4342
Mr. Hawn .....	4342
Mr. Paradis .....	4342
Ms. Demers .....	4343
Motion negated on division .....	4344

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

<b>Court Challenges Program</b>	
Mr. Dion .....	4344
Motion .....	4344
Mr. Lemieux .....	4346
Mr. Ménard (Hochelaga) .....	4347
Mr. Godin .....	4348
Mr. LeBlanc .....	4349

### ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

<b>National Capital Commission</b>	
Mr. Proulx .....	4351
Mr. Jean .....	4351
<b>Employment Insurance</b>	
Mr. D'Amours .....	4352
Mrs. Yelich .....	4353
<b>Darfur</b>	
Ms. Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques) .....	4354
Mr. Obhrai .....	4354

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