



CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 145 • NUMBER 084 • 3rd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, October 21, 2010

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, October 21, 2010

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1005)

[*English*]

PREVENTING HUMAN SMUGGLERS FROM ABUSING CANADA'S IMMIGRATION SYSTEM ACT

Hon. Gary Lunn (for the Minister of Public Safety) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-49, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act and the Marine Transportation Security Act.

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

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INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association respecting its participation at the Science and Technology Committee held in New York, Norfolk and Washington, D.C. in the United States of America from May 3 to May 6.

As well, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association respecting its participation at the Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security and the Sub-committee on the Transatlantic Relations held in Missouri and Washington, D.C. in the United States of America from July 9 to July 14.

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, 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-Europe Parliamentary Association respecting its participation at the meeting of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD, at the third part of the 2010 ordinary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe held in Paris and Strasbourg, France June 18 to June 26.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to table in the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, respecting its participation in the 26th General Assembly and Conference of Branch Chairs of the American Region of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, held in Winnipeg, Manitoba, from August 30 to September 2, 2010.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I would be honoured to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association respecting its participation to the spring session 2010 held in Riga, Latvia, May 28 to June 1.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HEALTH

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Health, entitled, "Review of the Cancellation of the Canadian HIV Vaccine Initiative's HIV Vaccine Manufacturing Facility Project".

* * *

STATISTICS ACT

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-583, An Act to amend the Statistics Act (Chief Statistician).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege and an honour to present this act, an act to amend the Statistics Act. This would take the politics out of interfering with the chief statistician.

As members know, there has been a great controversy in Canada with regard to the census. This bill would actually provide greater scrutiny to a process to actually have a chief statistician. This bill, in particular, would require a committee of the Privy Council, the Chief Statistician of Canada, the Bank of Canada and the National Statistics Council to come together to select a chief statistician.

Routine Proceedings

Second, once the chief statistician is selected, he or she will be required to do regular postings of information related to the survey and how it is used. This would restore the science behind the census and would take the politics out of it. That is a good thing for Canadians, I believe, because they believe in their census and they want to ensure that the science is what stands for the census, not ideology or other matters.

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, discussions have taken place among all parties, and I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, at the conclusion of today's debate on the opposition motion in the name of the Member from Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred to Tuesday, October 26, 2010, at the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders.

• (1010)

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

PUBLIC TRANSIT SAFETY

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to present three petitions.

The first petition is from residents of metro Vancouver who are very concerned about the increase in violent assaults against public transit, school bus, paratransit and intercity bus workers across Canada. They draw to our attention that almost 40% of Canadian bus operators have indicated that they have been physically assaulted during their careers.

The petitioners are calling on the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada to amend the Criminal Code to recognize the growing incidence of violence against public transit operators.

HOUSING

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from residents in Saskatchewan and Hamilton. There are a number of pages of signatures in support of a national housing strategy, particularly Bill C-304, which is currently before the House.

The petitioners are calling upon Parliament for an increased federal role in housing through investments in not-for-profit housing, housing for the homeless and access to housing. I am very pleased to present that petition today.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the last petition consists of pages and pages of signatures of folks in east Vancouver, metro Vancouver, all over, who are in support of Bill C-544 put forward by my colleague, the member for British Columbia Southern Interior, which is an act to amend the Health of Animals Act.

The petitioners are very concerned about the need to prohibit the import and export of horses for slaughter for human consumption, as well as horse meat products for human consumption.

OLD AGE SECURITY

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to present this petition on behalf of constituents from Lamont, Tofield, Mundare, St. Michael and other places in the constituency.

They note that the current recipients of the old age security pension are Canadians who have duly contributed to Canada for at least 10 years. They argue that decreasing the residency requirement for pension eligibility is a disincentive for new Canadians to work, contribute and integrate into Canadian society.

The petitioners ask, therefore, that the House of Commons oppose Bill C-428, An Act to amend the Old Age Security Act (residency requirement).

PASSPORT FEES

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my petition calls on the Canadian government to negotiate with the United States government to reduce United States and Canadian passport fees. The number of American tourists visiting Canada is at its lowest levels since 1972. It has fallen by 5 million visits in the last 7 years, from 16 million in 2002 to only 11 million in 2009.

Passport fees for an American family of four could be over \$500. Fifty per cent of Canadians have passports but only 25% of American citizens do.

At the recent Midwestern Legislative Conference of the Council of State Governments, attended by myself and over 500 elected representatives from 11 border states and 3 provinces, the following resolution was passed unanimously:

RESOLVED, that [the] Conference calls on President Barack Obama and [the Canadian] Prime Minister...to immediately examine a reduced fee for passports to facilitate cross-border tourism; and be it further

RESOLVED, that [the Conference] encourage[s] the governments to examine the idea of a limited time two-for-one passport renewal or new application;

To be a fair process, passport fees must be reduced on both sides of the border. Therefore, the petitioners call upon the government to work with the American government to examine a mutual reduction in passport fees to facilitate tourism and, finally, promote a limited time two-for-one passport renewal or new application fee on a mutual basis with the United States.

[Translation]

SENIORS

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition regarding improving the federal guaranteed income supplement, the spouse's allowance and the survivor's allowance programs. These programs are not fulfilling their basic purpose, which is to ensure an adequate income for low-income seniors. That is why the petitioners ask that there be automatic registration for the guaranteed income supplement, that it be increased by \$110 a month for persons who live alone, that the survivor's allowance be increased by \$199 per month, that there be full and unconditional retroactivity, and that the guaranteed income supplement and spouse's allowance be extended by six months upon the death of one of the beneficiaries in a couple.

It is my pleasure to table this petition on behalf of the FADOQ, the Quebec Federation of Senior Citizens.

•(1015)

[English]

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present three petitions. The first petition is on the topic of the long gun registry.

The petitioners states that the long gun registry was originally budgeted to cost Canadians \$2 million but the price tag spiralled out of control to an estimated \$2 billion a decade later, that the registry has not saved one single life since it was introduced, and that the registry is a political pacifier created to give the impression that Canada would be safer.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to support legislation that would cancel the Canadian long gun registry and streamline the Firearms Act.

SKIN CANCER

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is in regard to skin cancer.

The petitioners states that one in seven Canadians will develop skin cancer in their lifetime. Melanoma is the most serious types of skin cancer, one of the most rapidly increasing cancers in Canada and the second most common cancer in young adults.

The petitioners are asking for support for a national skin cancer and melanoma initiative to provide much needed access to newer drug treatments and funding for research and educational programs.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my last petition is in regard to medical benefits.

Business of Supply

The petitioners states that there are a number of severe, potentially life-threatening conditions that do not qualify for disability programs because they are not necessarily permanent.

The petitioners are calling upon the House of Commons to enact specific and precise legislation to provide additional medical EI benefits at least equal to maternity EI benefits.

[Translation]

FEDERAL COURTS ACT

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I have the honour to present a petition signed by several dozen French-speaking Ottawa and Gatineau residents from both sides of the river. These residents are asking for support for my Bill C-354. They state that since Canadian multinational companies sometimes violate human rights and environmental standards, a legal regime should be established to allow offshore residents to sue these Canadian companies in Canadian courts. That is precisely what Bill C-354 is proposing. These residents of Ottawa and Gatineau consequently urge parliamentarians to support this bill.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

•(1020)

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—FEDERAL SPENDING POWER

Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should, as long called for by the Bloc Québécois and now called for by the Member for Beauce, end the so-called federal spending power in the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces, eliminate the federal programs that violate the division of powers, and transfer tax points to the provinces by: (a) eliminating all federal spending in the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces, unless express authorization is given by Quebec or the province; (b) providing a systematic right to opt out with full financial compensation and without condition of all existing and future programs, whether co-funded or not, that intrude into jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces; and (c) transferring, at the request of Quebec or a province, fiscal room in the form of tax points and/or GST to replace the amounts that the province would otherwise have received under the Canada Health Transfer, federal programs in its areas of jurisdiction and the transfer for social programs and post-secondary education indexed to 1994-1995 levels.

Business of Supply

He said: Mr. Speaker, in 1867, the people of Quebec were not consulted on whether or not they wished to join Confederation, but in order to make the pill go down, so to speak, it was promised a spoonful of sugar: that it would be sovereign in several areas, and that it could use that partial sovereignty to develop as a society. That is indeed what the use of the word “confederation” rather than “federation” implied. It was on this condition that Quebec became a part of Canada.

However, Ottawa does not hesitate to invade Quebec's exclusive fields of jurisdiction. Family policy, health, education and regional development are a few of the most striking examples of areas of federal interference. In 2008-09, the federal government spent more than \$60 billion in areas that fall under Quebec's and the provinces' jurisdiction. This situation is patently intolerable.

We recall that the Conservative government committed to creating a framework for the so-called federal spending power in 2006, but so far it has not followed through. Last week the Conservative member for Beauce went further and proposed the pure and simple elimination of the so-called federal spending power as a solution to constitutional squabbles. This is what the Bloc Québécois is asking for today in this motion, and also what was proposed in the bill tabled in April by my colleague, the member for Saint-Lambert.

The motion focuses on three elements. First, it seeks the explicit elimination of Ottawa's self-given right to spend in areas outside its jurisdiction. Second, it calls for Quebec to be given a systematic right to opt out of programs, without conditions and with full compensation. Third, it seeks compensation in the form of tax points so that Ottawa cannot determine how much Quebec allocates to its various areas of responsibility.

The House of Commons finally recognized the Quebec nation. And recognizing a nation is more than just a symbolic gesture. Nations, like people, have fundamental rights, the most important being the right to control the social, economic and cultural development of its own society, in other words, the right to self-determination. You cannot, on one hand, recognize the Quebec nation and its right to make choices that are different from Canada's and, on the other, deny the nation the ability to assert that right by maintaining the federal spending power. Denying Quebec the power to spend undermines its very existence as a nation.

Let us consider the recent comments of the member for Beauce. It is a rare occasion when I agree with the member for Beauce, but I see that he has finally sided with the Bloc Québécois, and I hope that he can convince his party to support today's motion.

This is what the member for Beauce said on October 13. He himself was quoting Sir Wilfrid Laurier. The member for Beauce said that, in a speech to the Legislative Assembly of Quebec in 1871, Laurier made the following statement:

If the [federal] system is to avoid becoming a hollow concept, if it is to produce the results called for—this is Laurier speaking—, the legislatures must be independent, not just in the law, but also in fact. The local legislature must especially be completely sheltered from control by the federal legislature. If in any way the federal legislature exercises the slightest control over the local legislature, then the reality is no longer a federal union, but rather a legislative union in federal form.

That is the end of the quote by Sir Wilfrid Laurier cited by the member for Beauce.

• (1025)

The member for Beauce concluded:

Now, it's obvious that what Laurier feared has unfortunately come true. Ottawa exercises a lot more than “the slightest control” over local legislatures. The federal government today intervenes massively in provincial jurisdictions, and in particular in health and education, two areas where it has no constitutional legitimacy whatsoever. This is not what the Fathers of Confederation had intended. The objective of the 1867 Act was not to subordinate provincial governments to a central authority. But rather to have sovereign provinces within the limits of their powers, dealing with local matters that directly affected citizens; and a sovereign federal government within the limits of its own powers, dealing with matters of general national interest.

The member for Beauce and the Bloc Québécois are not the only ones challenging the legitimacy and the very basis for the existence of the federal spending power; all governments of Quebec have done so, no matter what their political allegiance. Why? Because the federal spending that encroaches on provincial jurisdictions is in direct opposition to the division of powers in Canada. In principle, both orders of government in Canada are equal and equally sovereign in their respective areas. The division of jurisdictions is supposed to be watertight in order to prevent the majority nation, the Canadian nation, from imposing its views on the minority nation, the Quebec nation.

The division of powers that took place in 1867 between Ottawa and the provinces is quite simple if we look at it in the context of the 19th century. Matters that directly affected people and their way of organizing their society fell under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. This was the case for instance for the civil laws that codified the relationships between people and the organization of society through social programs, health, education, cultural matters, etc.

If, however, an issue did not directly affect people or the internal organization of their society, it could be placed under federal jurisdiction. This is the case for monetary policy, international trade, and the overall regulation of trade and industry. In 1867, Quebec was not really industrialized and that aspect did not affect people very much. Thus, Quebecers believed they had acquired the autonomy they needed to allow them to organize their own society without external interference. And it was on that basis that Quebec agreed to enter into the Canadian federation in 1867.

However, the federal spending that encroaches upon areas of provincial jurisdiction calls into question this division of powers and Quebec's autonomy. In fact, this was the pact at the basis of the Canadian federation, which Canada is denying daily and has been denying for three generations by interfering freely with Quebec's areas of jurisdiction.

Benoît Pelletier, the former Quebec Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs under Jean Charest, said the following:

...have a great deal of difficulty in reconciling the values underlying the Canadian federation with the idea of a federal spending power that is in no way subject to the division of powers.

It is for that reason that the Séguin report in its turn expressed the opinion that:

Business of Supply

The “federal spending power” displays a singular logic in that the federal government intervenes every time in a field falling under provincial jurisdiction without having to adopt a constitutional amendment.

We could add “without having to obtain the authorization of Quebec's National Assembly”. In short, the federal spending power is the way English Canada unilaterally put an end to the pact in which Quebec agreed to be a part of Canada. Through the spending power, it managed to unilaterally change the distribution of powers to its benefit without having to go through the cumbersome process of constitutional amendment.

There is now a consensus in Quebec. The spending power is illegitimate. Quebec has always felt that the federal spending power was nothing more than a power to implement, that is to say that in the final analysis, it is a power to impose policies.

• (1030)

That is why Quebec maintains that federal spending power should be limited to areas in which the federal Parliament has legislative jurisdiction. Regardless of the party in power, Quebec has consistently maintained that Ottawa simply does not have the power to spend money in whatever area it chooses, and that any federal intervention in areas under Quebec's jurisdiction is in direct violation of the Constitution.

Federal government interference in fact proves that the fiscal imbalance has not been resolved. The fiscal imbalance is due to the fact that Ottawa raises more in taxes than it needs to discharge its own responsibilities. And the result, in Quebec's case, is that Quebec no longer has the tax room it needs to fund its own activities independently.

As long as Ottawa has the authority to spend in areas under provincial jurisdiction, the fiscal imbalance cannot be resolved. Conservative members who claim that the fiscal imbalance is now resolved have not understood a thing. The fiscal imbalance cannot be resolved without putting an end to federal spending power in areas that encroach upon the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces.

As the Séguin commission stated, and I quote:

...The problem of the federal spending power is closely tied to fiscal imbalance, and its use is underpinned by the surplus funds that the federal government controls.

That is what the commission found.

Quebec has no intention of being one of Ottawa's mere subcontractors. No, the fiscal imbalance has not been resolved and is, in fact, getting worse. More and more, as a result of the fiscal imbalance and its offshoot—spending power—the Quebec government is being relegated to the ranks of a federal government subcontractor. Through its interference and conditional transfers, Ottawa is imposing Canada's priorities and choices on Quebec.

The situation has gotten so bad that Quebec's own-source revenues hit an all-time low in 2009-10, when a quarter of Quebec's budget envelope was being controlled by the federal government. Now more than ever, it is time for the federal government to hand over the GST to Quebec, as well as a portion of individual income tax, so that Quebec is no longer at the mercy of federal transfer payments and Ottawa's whims.

In 2006, as I was saying earlier, the House of Commons finally recognized the existence of the Quebec nation. Recognizing the existence of a nation is more than just a symbolic act. Nations, like people, have fundamental rights, and the most fundamental among them is a nation's right to control its own social, economic and cultural development, that is to say, the right to self-determination.

One cannot, on the one hand, recognize that the Quebec nation exists and has the right to make choices that are different from those that Canada makes, which right is at the core of nationhood, and on the other hand, deny that right by maintaining the federal spending power. That spending power is in fact a negation of the Quebec nation.

The so-called framework mentioned in the 2007 Speech from the Throne, which was to set limits on the spending power, had indeed been the subject of official Conservative promises, and has continued to be the subject of such promises since; it is nothing but lip service.

I will now quote from the 2007 Speech from the Throne, which said:

...our government will introduce legislation to place formal limits on the use of the federal spending power for new shared-cost programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction. This legislation will allow provinces and territories to opt out with reasonable compensation if they offer compatible programs.

• (1035)

It should be noted that the government's offer, its commitment in that text, is limited to new programs, even though it was already spending \$62 billion in areas that do not fall under its jurisdiction. That is the figure from 2008-09. This amount is more or less equivalent to Quebec's entire budget, which was \$65 billion for that year, and this is money Ottawa spent in areas that fall under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. The Speech from the Throne allows all of that to go on happening. Moreover, it only refers to new shared-cost programs, which are almost non-existent. For instance, as agriculture is an area of shared jurisdiction, the agriculture policy framework is not covered by the commitment in the throne speech. Moreover, insofar as the infrastructure Canada program is concerned, the throne speech changed nothing because Quebec already had the right to select its own projects.

So there was nothing, absolutely nothing in the Speech from the Throne aside from empty words. In fact it was a new version of the Jean Chrétien throne speech, which said approximately the same thing in 1996; and nothing was done following that one either, of course.

It is the same thing as the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville's social union, by virtue of which the Canadian provinces, with the exception of Quebec, agreed to allow Ottawa to take the lead in matters of social policy.

Business of Supply

The bill that the Bloc Québécois already tabled is an offer of reasonable accommodation. We are aware that Canadians do not want to completely eliminate the federal power to interfere. When I say Canadians, I am obviously not talking about Quebecers, but other Canadians, who generally want the central government to be able to set directions and priorities for the entire country in all areas. That is not in keeping with the promise made to Quebec 140 years ago. It is in keeping with Canadians' vision of Canada, though. In April 2010, to put an end to Ottawa's interference in areas under Quebec's jurisdiction, the Bloc Québécois introduced Bill C-507, which I just mentioned, on eliminating the federal spending power in Quebec's jurisdictions.

Today's motion, which is very much in line with our bill, proposes a compromise by saying that Ottawa should at least give Quebec a full right to opt out of any federal programs in areas that intrude into the provinces' jurisdictions. Canadians will be able to keep on denying the division of powers for themselves, but not for us in Quebec.

One Conservative Party member heard the Bloc Québécois' call, and we can only be glad. Just a few months after we introduced our bill, the member for Beauce repeated the Bloc's demands almost word for word. He said:

However, several other programs, from family allowances to grants to universities and hospital insurance, were set up which clearly did not respect the constitutional division of powers...

This intrusion into provincial jurisdiction was accomplished by the so-called federal spending power.

No constitutional provision to legitimize this federal spending power was ever adopted. The Supreme Court of Canada has never explicitly recognized this power either. The federal government was certainly aware that the power to spend in areas of provincial jurisdiction does not exist in the Constitution...

Ending the federal spending power, eliminating the federal programs that violate the division of powers, and transferring tax points to the provinces would be the right thing to do from several perspectives.

• (1040)

We agree. Consequently, I invite the Conservative government to support our Bill C-507. I also invite the Conservative members and the members from all the other parties to support the motion I have put forward this morning.

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague for his excellent speech on the issue of the federal spending power.

The question I would like to ask my colleague is the following. For decades now, Quebec governments under both the Liberals and the Parti Québécois have been asking the federal government to limit its spending power, especially in areas under Quebec's jurisdiction, such as education, health, and so forth.

We very much appreciated the initiative of the hon. member for Beauce and hope that all members of the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party, especially those from Quebec, will vote in favour of this motion.

How does he explain, though, the federal government's systematic refusal to give Quebec the power to manage its own areas of jurisdiction?

Mr. Jean Dorion: Mr. Speaker, my answer is that, ultimately, it is just their lust for power. It is quite natural for people who have

power to want more of it. That is the reason for the federal government's constant intrusions into jurisdictions that are not its own.

To simplify and perhaps boil down this concept of the spending power, I want to give two examples. The Constitution assigns education to the provincial governments and the Government of Quebec. Therefore, the federal government does not have the right to, for example, build a university, hire professors and so forth. In actual fact, though, what it does is offer the universities money to organize education in a particular way. It does not pass any legislation. It does not say they have to because it has the power. It does not do that. It does not pass any laws ordering them to do anything in particular. It offers money, and if a university wants the cash, it has to accept the conditions. There is a conditional aspect, therefore, to the spending power, and that is how they force educators in Quebec, for example, to follow federal directives.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is very proud of the financial support we provide to the province of Quebec in various areas.

I want to ask two questions, but first I would like to recall a few things, such as the millions of dollars to save jobs and help the unemployed and other people in need. There is more than \$200 million for knowledge and innovation in Quebec and more than \$1 billion to protect companies and communities during the global recession. I am very proud of the tens of millions of dollars we shared to help Quebec athletes prepare for the Olympic Games.

I have a question for the hon. member about that. I was so proud to be Canadian when our Canadian athletes filed into the House of Commons. The majority were from Quebec. I want to know why it was that when we encouraged and celebrated these athletes by singing the national anthem, which we love, the Bloc Québécois did not join in to encourage these athletes from Quebec? In addition, how are they going to finance these games for Olympic athletes from Quebec?

• (1045)

Mr. Jean Dorion: Mr. Speaker, what we just witnessed demonstrates how the federal government uses its spending power to meddle in areas that should fall under the Quebec government's jurisdiction.

For example, having a single Canadian team at the Olympic Games denies the existence of the Quebec nation. When they do that kind of thing and attempt to impose Canadian symbols, it should come as no surprise that the people who care about the rights and legitimacy of the Quebec nation do not support the symbols. Symbols should be cherished by the people promoting them, those who see themselves in them. We do not see ourselves in these symbols, which are symbols of interference in our affairs as a nation.

Business of Supply

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague referred to the Constitution, but one must always consider the current context, and I would like him to reflect on that. The fact is that, setting aside the territories for a moment, there are currently four provinces in Canada with fewer inhabitants than the city of Laval and six provinces with fewer inhabitants than the old city of Montreal. We understand that there are some provinces that need the federal government in order to make progress. However, colleagues in this House must understand that Quebec does not need the other provinces in order to flourish. Quebec is capable of creating its own systems, its own networks, and its own social development plan.

I would therefore like my colleague to compare the events of 1867 and what is occurring right now.

Mr. Jean Dorion: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that Quebec is big enough to develop as a nation, and it has the means, the land mass and a population comparable to that of a country such as Sweden, which is not considered a poor and underdeveloped nation—far from it. We certainly have the means to develop as a nation, and we have all the characteristics of a nation. Not only do we have our own language, but we also have our own history. All Quebecers, whatever their origin may be, have the sense that they belong to a society that, as a nation, shares many national ideals and concerns.

That may not be the case for very small provinces that, in any case, have a lot in common with their neighbours. They may not have the same way of doing things. And that is what makes Quebec a nation—something the House of Commons has finally recognized.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windfall, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, an issue we had in Newfoundland and Labrador recently was a devolution of labour market development from federal to provincial jurisdiction. One of the things the government did was to provide a lump-sum payment to the province to do this.

When they say opting out of federal programs and carrying on on their own, with compensation, are they talking about that one-time payment, or should the federal government compensate year over year for that program they opted out of and started their own?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Dorion: Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, everything comes down to tax fields. When the federal government spends money in areas outside of its jurisdiction, it will naturally levy taxes. But taxpayers, businesses and consumers have a limited capacity for paying taxes. When the federal government starts intruding in areas that are outside of its jurisdiction, it levies taxes. What happens then? If a province were to decide not to participate, not to accept these new federal plans, but wanted to tax its people, the federal government would have to back out of the tax field so that the province—Quebec, for example—could collect money for similar programs.

That is why we are calling on the government to transfer tax points, a certain percentage of taxes, or the ability to levy taxes, to Quebec.

• (1050)

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for this opportunity to speak against, and let me emphasize against, today's motion from the Bloc Québécois. This is another very disappointing, thinly veiled attempt by Bloc members to desperately justify their presence here in Ottawa after 20 long years in perpetual opposition, which is where they will remain if they continue putting forward motions like this one, 20 long years in which the Bloc has obtained zero real results.

I know the Bloc will never admit it but in only five years our Conservative government and our Quebec Conservative MPs, such as the member for Beauce, have done more for their home province of Quebec than the Bloc ever can and ever will. More and more Quebecers are realizing that as well.

The Bloc will not admit it but the member for Beauce, my former colleague on the finance committee, is doing a great job for his constituents here in Parliament. He is doing such a great job that in the last election a whopping 60% of the voters in Beauce supported him while the Bloc candidate received a mere 13%. Clearly, more Quebecers are turning away from the Bloc and turning toward our Conservative government that delivers for them.

We delivered on economic leadership. We delivered on solving the fiscal imbalance. We delivered much more to benefit Quebecers, in fact all Canadians.

First on that list of Conservative accomplishments was our strong action to solve the fiscal imbalance for Quebec and for all provinces and territories. The previous Liberal government gutted support for the provinces and territories by literally cutting tens of billions in transfer support for health care and social programs. Let us be clear, Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin slashed transfers like never before and that created major problems in schools and hospitals from coast to coast to coast. It is not a good legacy.

I would hope that all Liberal members would be ashamed of that, but I ask them to reflect on what two former premiers once said on that matter. First, let me read to them what a former Ontario premier said:

When the federal [Liberal] government decided in its wisdom that it would cut back unilaterally, particularly in the area of social assistance, it had a major and devastating effect on the people of [Ontario].

Second, let me quote a former British Columbia premier, who said that the Chrétien-Martin federal surpluses were “accumulated over the backs of the provinces and territories in cuts to transfer payments”.

What is more, if Liberal MPs want to know more about their actual record, they should talk to those two premiers, and they do not have to go too far to do that, because that former Ontario premier is their Liberal caucus colleague, the member for Toronto Centre, and that former British Columbia premier is also their Liberal caucus colleague, the member for Vancouver South.

Business of Supply

But if they do not believe them, they can talk to their former finance critic and Liberal colleague, the member for Markham—Unionville, who said only this year:

I think...the Chrétien government—even though I am a Liberal—cut perhaps too deeply, too much offloading, with the benefit of hindsight. And there were some negative effects.

But if they do not believe their former finance critic, they might consider talking to the current finance critic, the member for Kings—Hants. This is what he had to say:

The...[Liberal] government balanced its books by slashing transfers to the provinces by forcing the provinces...to face deficits, and health care systems and education systems in a crisis as a result of its inability and irresponsibility to actually tighten its own belt more significantly.

Without a doubt, the problem is not here today but it is what happened under the previous Liberal government. The Liberals' devastating legacy is still evident. In fact, every year during finance committee prebudget consultations we hear witness after witness speak to the devastation that the Liberals brought.

This is what the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations told the finance committee:

The federal government chose to cut investment in education in the mid-1990s to reduce the deficit. Due to these cuts, Canada faced a brain drain...

• (1055)

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities said:

...mistakes of [the] nineties when federal and provincial governments push deficits of balance sheets into the streets of cities and communities. The damage done to Canada's cities is still evident.

Making it worse, Liberal members denied, and more shockingly, mocked claims of a fiscal imbalance when they were in power. In fact, let me read a press release from the former Liberal intergovernmental affairs minister in which the government cavalierly scoffed at the concerns of Canada's provinces and territories:

Rather than fiscal imbalance, we need to talk about the collective responsibility of our governments... [T]he slogan: the money is in Ottawa, the needs are in the provinces...does not reflect reality. There is no fiscal imbalance.

Shockingly and disappointingly for Quebeckers, the Bloc was helpless to do anything to stop the Liberal government and to fix the fiscal imbalance. Realizing that more and more Quebeckers started to reconsider their support for the tired and ineffective Bloc Québécois, I am happy to report that Quebeckers turned away from the Bloc and helped elect a strong group of Conservative MPs from the province, and in the process, a new Conservative government here in Ottawa.

I am happy to report that in two short years we took a major step to address the fiscal imbalance and significantly increase transfer payments to the provinces and territories. In fact, in 2006 our new Conservative government was the first in Canadian history to recognize and acknowledge there was a fiscal imbalance. Only a year later in budget 2007, we took steps to restore fiscal balance through a comprehensive plan that put federal support for provinces and territories on a long-term predictable and principle-based footing for the future, a plan that ensured all provinces and territories would receive more funding and transfers.

I note for the Bloc that the former Quebec finance minister, Yves Séguin, praised our action saying that it significantly redressed a long-time sore spot, the fiscal imbalance.

The well-respected *La Presse* economics writer, Claude Piché, echoed that praise when he said that it tackled the issue of federal-provincial transfers credibly and coherently.

Indeed, under our Conservative government, federal support for provinces and territories has remained strong. It is at an all-time high and it will continue to grow. For example, Quebec will receive increased support through major federal transfers in 2010-11 totalling \$17.2 billion, an increase of \$5.2 billion, or a 44% increase from under the old Liberal government. This includes \$8.5 billion for equalization, an increase of over \$3.7 billion, or 78% more than the Liberals were providing. It includes \$6.1 billion through the Canada health transfer, an increase of \$1 billion, or 21% above the Liberal level, and \$2.6 billion through the Canada social transfer. This represents a \$441 million, or a 21% increase since the Liberals were in power.

This long-term support helps ensure Quebec has the resources needed to provide the essential public services including health care, post-secondary education and other social services.

What is more, we have also said repeatedly that, unlike the previous Liberal government, we will not cut transfers to other levels of government as part of our efforts to balance the budget. This is a welcome and reassuring commitment that even Quebec Premier Jean Charest has applauded. He said, "The federal government has given reassurances.... We are satisfied..."

While the Bloc Québécois brings forward motions like today's that are nothing more, as I say, than a thinly veiled political game, our Conservative government is focusing on what really matters to all Canadians, including Quebeckers, and that is the economy. We all recognize that the global economic recovery is fragile. Canada will be impacted by economic circumstances beyond our borders, especially those in the United States. That is why our government's main priority is the economy and implementing Canada's economic action plan to protect Canada's recovery.

Canada's economic action plan is clearly having a positive impact. We have over 23,000 job-creating projects under the plan that have committed funding, with close to 97% of those completed or under way across Canada.

• (1100)

Our economic action plan is getting positive results and is providing stability for our economy. We have helped create over 400,000 net new jobs since July 2009. We have lowered taxes for all Canadians. We have revitalized our infrastructure.

Business of Supply

Indeed, despite the fragile global recovery, Canada's economy is in relatively good shape, so much so that the IMF and the OECD both are forecasting that Canada's growth will be at the head of the pack in the industrialized world this year and next. That does not happen by accident.

Our economic action plan is working and helping to put Canadians to work right across the country, including in Quebec. Let me recap only a few ways that budget 2010, year two of our Canada's economic action plan, is helping protect workers and families in Quebec through the economic conditions.

First and foremost, Canada's economic action plan is providing historic investments in infrastructure in Quebec. Examples of specific projects include projects at the port of Trois-Rivières, including site development to improve storage at the port and security upgrades at the new borders at the port. There is the expansion of the Monique Corriveau library in the city of Quebec, and refurbishments of an indoor pool and cultural centre in Beauceville.

Montreal area commuters will benefit from \$50.5 million in new funding over the next two years for Jacques Cartier and Champlain Bridges Incorporated. This funding will ensure that the corporation can make the capital expenditure required to maintain the safety of its bridges, which are among the busiest in Canada.

Remote communities will benefit from an investment of \$18 million over the next two years to support the capital and operational requirements of Tshiuetin Rail Transportation Inc., which operates a passenger rail service throughout western Labrador and northeastern Quebec. Communities and businesses in Quebec will benefit from the \$28 million provided to support the operations of ferry services in Atlantic Canada, including the route between Îles de la Madeleine, Quebec and Souris, Prince Edward Island.

Shockingly, the Bloc voted against Canada's economic action plans and all these job-creating projects to help these communities in Quebec.

As well, communities and businesses in Quebec are benefiting from the \$14.6 million provided to the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, to increase the vitality of communities and help small and medium size businesses and communities enhance their competitiveness. Again the Bloc voted against supporting job growth.

Canada's economic action plan also affirms our government's commitment to work with sectors such as aerospace, to help put in place the conditions they need to succeed and build upon their role as an important economic contributor. Canada's aerospace industry is a critical economic engine. It is a cornerstone of the Canadian economy, providing thousands of skilled jobs across the country, employing some 83,000 skilled professionals in over 400 firms, including some 42,000 jobs in Quebec.

The Canadian aerospace industry is developing cutting-edge technologies that are enabling our companies to be major players on the global stage. Companies such as Bombardier Aerospace, CAE and Bell Helicopter together make up a key component of Canada's economy, and the economies of greater Montreal and the province of Quebec.

Through budget 2010, Canada's economic action plan continued to support the aerospace industry with nearly \$500 million to support the RADARSAT Constellation mission, Canada's next generation of Earth observation satellites. Claude Lajeunesse, president and CEO of Aerospace Industries Association of Canada, applauded that move by stating:

This measure will stimulate the space sector and keep value-added jobs in Canada while serving government priorities.

I cannot believe the Bloc members voted against supporting high quality jobs in the aerospace industry, but sadly, they did.

• (1105)

There is so much more in the economic action plan to help put Canadians to work right across the country and in Quebec. Again, it is working. Indeed, in September, 15,000 net new jobs were created in Quebec alone, increasing the total to 130,000 in Quebec in the past 15 months. In the words of Quebec finance minister Raymond Bachand:

That's the best performance in [North] America. [The Quebec] economy is doing relatively well.

While the Bloc is concentrated on political gains and voting against the economic action plan, our Conservative government is concentrated on the economy and helping create jobs for Quebecers. Moreover, when the Liberals denied the fiscal imbalance existed, the Bloc could not get anything done.

Our Conservative government took action and restored the fiscal balance for Quebec and all provinces. No wonder more and more Quebecers are sending more Conservative MPs to Ottawa.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member started out with quotes from my party and others. I would like to start with a quote from one of his own. This goes back to the late 1990s, and it states:

[T]here is no reason to have Ottawa collect our revenue. Any incremental cost of collecting our own personal income tax would be far outweighed by the policy flexibility that Alberta would gain, as Quebec's experience has shown. ...

Alberta should also argue that each province should raise its own revenue for health care—i.e., replace Canada Health and Social Transfer cash with tax points as Quebec has argued for many years. ...

It is imperative to take the initiative, to build firewalls around Alberta, to limit the extent to which an aggressive and hostile federal government can encroach upon legitimate provincial jurisdiction.

Those words came from the right hon. Prime Minister, also echoed by the member for Beauce. If they are going to support this motion, why would the other members of his own party not?

Mr. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I chose not to bring out a stack of quotes that would reflect the positions taken by present and former Liberals, but they cannot duck the facts. I have spoken with many former and present finance ministers, in fact, members of my caucus, who were part of provincial governments and were challenged with balancing their budgets when the Liberals in the 1990s offloaded their deficit-cutting onto the provinces.

Business of Supply

When I first came to the House, one of the most serious topics of debate was wait times in health care. We all know why that happened. It is because of the cuts in the 1990s by the Liberal government. To this day, I still cannot understand how they can stand proudly in the House and say they balanced a budget during the 1990s when all they did is offload a deficit onto the provinces and onto the backs of the most vulnerable Canadians.

• (1110)

[Translation]

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague what his leader recently said about spending power, and I would like to hear what he has to say about this.

This is what his leader said:

I have said many times, even since the election of this new government, that I am opposed and our party is opposed to federal spending power in provincial jurisdictions. In my opinion, such spending power in the provinces' exclusive jurisdictions goes against the very spirit of federalism. Our government is clear that we do not intend to act in that way.

In light of this, why does the government continue to invest in regional development and to duplicate and intrude into Quebec's jurisdictions that are not set out in the Constitution? The Conservative party continues to invest in jurisdictions such as health, education and other sectors.

Is my colleague contradicting what his leader said, or does he agree with his leader and with the member for Beauce?

[English]

Mr. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I think most of my colleagues on this side of the House know that I always respect what my leader says.

My leader has been very clear that we will not be intrusive to the provinces. There are defined jurisdictions in this country. It is not just about Quebec. We on this side of the House, and in fact, in other opposition parties, represent all regions of this country. That is our role, to represent all regions.

I cannot help but question if that hon. member is representing all of his constituents with the positions he is taking here today. Our role is not just to represent a few. Our role is not to represent an individual ideology. Our role is to represent all of our constituents and provide what we can, the best service to all of them. I will stand proudly and always do that.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on a daily basis I see the members of Parliament from Quebec in our party working tirelessly to ensure that the province of Quebec and in particular the people they represent get their fair share of government programs, whether it be through Canada's economic action plan or whether it is to ensure that we make sure there is fairness in equalization.

I know the parliamentary secretary has taken great pains to go to every member of this House. As a matter of fact, I know he has travelled across this country consulting with Canadians to make sure that this government delivers what Canadians need and want.

I wonder if the parliamentary secretary would comment on the actions not only of our members from the province of Quebec, but

others in Canada who have wanted to make sure this federation gets stronger with every single Canadian in this great country of ours.

Mr. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that question. It reflects the points I have been trying to make, that we are trying to help all Canadians.

In answer to that question, I will provide some figures that back up that fact. In budget 2010, in knowledge and innovation alone, just that one sector, not talking about what we have done in aerospace and infrastructure, there was \$32 million for federal research granting councils in the province of Quebec, \$8 million a year to support research in post-secondary institutions in Quebec, and \$15 million per year to double the budget of the college and community innovation program.

That is the future of Quebec, educating the children of Quebec. What the Bloc wants to do here is impede that, stop that and say that what we have provided to the children, the young people and the educators in the Quebec is irrelevant. It is not.

I have an entire list that I would love to share and perhaps in questions and comments later on today we will share some more of the financial support that we have given to make sure that we as a Conservative government represent the people of Quebec.

• (1115)

[Translation]

Mr. Guy André: Mr. Speaker, my question continues with the same theme. On October 29, 2007, following a statement from the member for Macleod's party leader concerning federal spending power, the Bloc Québécois moved a motion in the House of Commons, demanding that:

...the bill on federal spending power that the government will introduce should, at a minimum, provide for Quebec to have the right to opt out with no strings attached and with full financial compensation from any federal program, whether existing or not and cost-shared or not, which invades Quebec's areas of jurisdiction.

After making such a statement, this leader—who in the election campaign and after the Speech from the Throne said he was in favour of eliminating federal spending power—voted against this motion. Can the member explain these contradictions and the government's hypocrisy?

The government is trying to make Quebecers believe that it is against eliminating federal spending power in the areas of jurisdictions under the province and Quebec, but it continues to invest more than \$62 billion in these areas of jurisdiction.

[English]

Mr. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I still stand amazed at these questions. The members say we are intruding. They vote against every attempt we make to promote jobs, create jobs, or maintain jobs.

The work-sharing program that this government put in place was incredibly well accepted and the uptake was incredible in Quebec.

Business of Supply

That hon. member stood in the House and voted against that. Now that hon. member is telling us to stay out of their business, that they are going to do better than we did, when we have created all these jobs. We have helped create all these jobs in Quebec. We are here for all Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague from Brossard—La Prairie.

I am pleased to take part in debate today on the motion by the member for Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher. The motion, which I will refrain from reading, gives us the opportunity for a debate that will offer all Canadians a clear option and a clear choice as to the country where we want to live. The motion shows that the Bloc and the Conservatives are working to achieve common objectives, in a kind of coalition, in other words.

First, I would like to speak out against the opportunism exhibited by the Bloc Québécois, in submitting a motion to the House dealing with as important a subject as this. The spending power has been the subject of numerous political and constitutional discussions, particularly those leading up to the Meech Lake accord. The fiscal arrangements between the provinces and the federal government, which enable the Government of Canada to exercise its spending power in areas of provincial jurisdiction, go back to the time of Confederation. At that time, the provinces received grants from the federal government to make up for the loss of certain taxing powers. Today, these arrangements allow us, among other things, to mould the economic and social environment of our country.

One well-known example of the federal spending power is very certainly the Canada Health and Social Transfer. There are also other institutions, like the Canada Foundation for Innovation, that allow for the federal spending power to be exercised in the provinces.

Some people consider the federal spending power to be interference by Ottawa in areas of provincial jurisdiction without first consulting the provinces, or without obtaining their consent. This situation has heightened some provinces' desire for greater autonomy, particularly Quebec and Alberta.

The Bloc Québécois has leapt at the statement by the member for Beauce, a candidate for the Conservative leadership. But what is the member proposing? It is both simple and complex, and it would have serious consequences. He proposes to eliminate the federal spending power. He also talks about complete withdrawal by the federal government from funding of social programs such as health and education. We might guess that the member was in need of visibility and has found a goldmine in this proposal.

The candidate for the leadership of the Conservative Party, the member for Beauce, stated that federal health transfers must be eliminated because they violate the Constitution of Canada. He also said this is the opinion of the Conservative Party. Leaving aside the ambitions of the member for Beauce, we might wonder whether there is another motive for that statement. Yes, indeed there is another one. We are very well aware that the Government of Canada has to renegotiate the Canada Health and Social Transfer. That is the government's real intention.

But can we trust the Conservative Party to negotiate that agreement? The answer is self-evident. Only the Liberal Party has proved to the Canadian public that it is worthy of their trust. It can be trusted to renegotiate the agreement before the expiry date, in 2014.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Mr. Speaker, I think you should send some pages to the other side with buckets of water, because some members are choking. It might help them cool down.

Despite what members opposite may say, we, the Liberals, are committed to protecting a public and universal health care system. However, the current Conservative Prime Minister said that each province should raise its own revenue for health care and that we should replace the Canada health and social transfer with tax points.

As for the Minister of Health, she said in the House, barely two days ago, that the government respects the Canada Health Act and that this same government supports a public and universal health care system. I have my doubts about the statement made by the Minister of Health.

When it comes to transparency, the Conservatives' record is rather opaque. Their memory is failing them, and they easily resort to deceit. Just think of the outrageous G8 and G20 expenses, the patronage in infrastructure projects, the control exerted by the Prime Minister on the government and on public organizations, the Conservatives' will to build megaprisons and the fact that they want to spend billions of dollars on fighter jets with no competitive bidding process.

Such statements on the part of the government worry Canadians and lead to bizarre and unfortunate speculation.

• (1120)

If the Prime Minister supports the Canada Health Act, why does he let his members promote policies that run against his government's position? Perhaps he supports the position of the member for Beauce. But where does that member's vision come from?

I am going to read an excerpt of a statement made by the Conservative Prime Minister. It was published in the January 26, 2001 issue of the *National Post*. The Prime Minister said:

[English]

Alberta should also argue that each province should raise its own revenue for health care—i.e., replace Canada Health and Social Transfer cash with tax points as Quebec has argued for many years. Poorer provinces would continue to rely on Equalization to ensure they have adequate revenues.

[Translation]

So it is nothing new that the Conservative government is thinking of slashing health funding. Why? To finance its tax cuts for large companies, tax cuts that, like its record deficit, Canada can ill afford. Federalism like that is sounding the death knell for our health care system and our social safety net.

Business of Supply

This is another choice that is bad for Canadians. It is another in a series of poor decisions that the spendthrift Conservative government has made. This government continues to forge ahead with its out-of-control spending after plunging Canada into deficit even before the current recession began. It is simple. What does the government want? It wants to slash spending, cut taxes for large companies and set a record deficit.

The Liberal finance critic has stated that the Conservatives' wasteful and excessive spending have put Canada into a deficit position. Now the Minister of Finance wants to slash health and education transfers at the same time as he provides large companies with tax breaks we cannot afford.

Perhaps the hon. member for Beauce is hiding his real intention, to create a private health care system and to remove the government's ability to enforce the Canada Health Act. How would that be done? By reducing all federal health and social transfers. That would mean \$40 billion less in provincial budgets—yes, \$40 billion.

The Bloc Québécois motion seeks to restrict the federal spending power in areas under provincial jurisdiction without the express consent of the provincial government. The motion also provides for an opting-out clause with full compensation and no strings attached.

We believe that the federal spending power is an extremely important tool with which the Government of Canada can exercise its responsibility to protect and strengthen Canada's solid and enduring political unity. That is the way in which Ottawa has made use of the federal spending power under Liberal governments. We have used this responsibility to establish Canada-wide programs like public health care, a program that we value and cherish.

The Liberal Party is committed to protecting the universality of public health care, investing in learning and in jobs and giving Canada back its international leadership role. It will come as no surprise that the Liberal Party is opposed to this motion. We will vote against it.

• (1125)

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer will be voting against the Bloc Québécois motion. That does not surprise me since it is clear that the Liberals have made no progress since Confederation in 1867.

I would like to ask the hon. member who he votes for in Quebec. Whether we are talking about the Liberal Party of Quebec, Robert Bourassa or Jean-Jacques Bertrand, they all always asked for limitations on the federal spending power. Of course, all Parti Québécois governments have also demanded the same thing. But Quebec members of the Liberal Party of Canada have been opposed to the unanimous will of all Quebec governments for a number of decades.

Is this House another planet for them; do they have any direct link with Quebecers? First and foremost, they represent Quebec in the House of Commons and they are elected by Quebecers.

Could the hon. member explain further the position of the Liberal Party, which always goes against the will of Quebec?

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Bloc member's reaction should not come as a surprise. I respect their way of doing

things. But everyone, not only in the House but everywhere in Quebec and even across Canada, knows full well that their objective, their mantra, is to bring about the separation of Quebec from the rest of Canada.

The separatists from the Bloc Québécois or the Parti Québécois have only one way of seeing things: complete separation from the rest of Canada. So we should not be surprised by the hon. member's attitude in his questions.

Now, when we talk about the right to spend, we must agree on one thing. What Quebec has been asking for a long time—and I understand it—is to prevent the Government of Canada from deciding, without consultations or negotiations, to spend money as it wishes on anything in the province. The hon. member obviously does not want us to encroach on his jurisdiction and promote Canada. That is not the Liberal Party's position.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague has been in the House longer than I have. I will not get into the quantity of years as it sometimes can become quite embarrassing.

That being said, I would like to ask him about when he was referring back to the mid-nineties. The downloading of services during the time of fiscal prudence was discussed earlier by many members of the Conservative Party. Am I not correct in saying that at that time the roots of the Conservative Party, vested within Reform Party, Alliance Party and so on, actually called for greater cuts to the system so that we could get to the balanced budget at a much quicker rate?

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for this very relevant question. In the 1990s, following its 1993 victory, the Liberal government had to make cuts to the federal bureaucracy in order to pay back the deficit created by the preceding Conservative government. That Conservative government, in a completely similar fashion, if not an identical one to the current Reform Conservative government, created a deficit that was unbelievably huge for Canada at that time.

They looked at the programs. The Liberal government struggled to successfully balance Canada's finances, and did so in exemplary fashion. A number of countries, such as Australia, Great Britain and others, followed its example.

Both then and now, the Conservative government wanted to cut corporate taxes and reduce government services to the bare minimum. So it overspent and created a massive deficit, but the current Reform Conservative government is creating an even bigger one. Unfortunately, that is what has happened with Conservative governments, historically—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie.

Business of Supply

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the member for Hull—Aylmer for sharing his time with me during this debate on the Bloc Québécois motion.

I find this motion rather curious in that it claims to deal with an urgent issue of vital importance to Quebec, according to the Bloc Québécois. The ideology behind it draws on ultra-conservative theories that even the reform government opposite refuses to tackle officially.

[English]

I will begin by looking at the timing of this motion. The member for Beauce, in a speech to the Albany Club in Toronto on Wednesday, October 13, pretended that the federal government intervenes in provincial jurisdictions, particularly in health and education, two areas where, in his inflated opinion, it has no constitutional legitimacy to do so.

[Translation]

This eloquent rant continues by stating that we should envisage a new way of conducting federal-provincial relations. The big bad wolf, as the member for Beauce calls the federal government, should not interfere in provincial matters and activities.

Clearly, it is a simplistic way of summarizing the highly complex task of governing a federation. Mr. Speaker, allow me to remind my colleagues, who seem to have forgotten, that we are still a country.

The most ironic aspect of this Bloc motion is its source. And yes, they were inspired by a Conservative member, a former minister, who now aspires to spread the true Conservative doctrine throughout the land.

Before delving into the arguments against this motion, which seem exceedingly clear to me, I would like to point out a glaring inconsistency in the Bloc Québécois motion.

[English]

Since when does that party, which claims to be the only “true” defender of Quebec interests, need a Conservative Reform MP to put on the radar what it now sees as a pressing issue? Is it its way of taking credit for an initiative someone else has been shopping around?

[Translation]

Let us now look at the arguments which, in my opinion, call into question the relevance—not to mention the urgency—of this issue.

At present, in Quebec, this is not even an issue. Quebec citizens have much more pressing concerns—such as the future of their pension plan, their health system and their jobs—than such very esoteric constitutional matters.

Furthermore, whether you are a nationalist or a federalist, today, as was the case 15 years ago, this is not an issue in which Quebecers are engaged on a daily basis.

The issues central to the major debates on the future of Quebec that we have had over the past 25 years are language, culture, pride and other aspects of identity. I have never heard talk of the spending powers of the different levels of government outside of political circles.

The Bloc members will now rise together to proclaim loud and clear that this motion is vital because the current government does not respect the division of powers set out in the British North America Act.

I would like to digress a bit here to stress the subtlety of referring to that constitutional act, since I assume the Bloc Québécois would not be referring to that act, given that Quebec refused to sign the Constitution in 1982. But, on second thought, I could be wrong.

The Bloc Québécois claims that the federal government should not help the provinces when it comes to health and education, because those areas fall under provincial jurisdiction according to the Constitution.

Let us take a closer look at the ins and outs of the Constitution Act of 1982.

[English]

Here we have the Bloc saying that the federal government has violated the Constitution that the province refused to adhere to. On the other hand, it appears that it is somewhat opportune to refer to it while still refusing to admit the brilliance of its scope. When it works in the Bloc's favour, it likes it, but when it does not get enough out of it, it is a disgrace. This is looking more and more like a case of wanting one's cake and eating it too, or, as we say in Quebec, “avoir le beurre et l'argent du beurre”.

[Translation]

At the heart of this debate on the division of government powers and responsibilities lies, I believe, the whole question of the very delicate balance we are trying to achieve in terms of governance within the federation. This balance is not only vital to making this country work, but it is also the primary reason we have been so successful over the past 143 years.

We in the Liberal Party are fully aware that our federation can always be improved, but its basic principles—including the federal responsibility of ensuring the greatest possible fairness for all Canadians—are not negotiable.

In that regard, the Bloc Québécois and the Reform Conservatives form the strongest coalition this House has ever seen. For both parties, the best form of governance for Canada would be a federal government stripped to bare bones, in which all real power would belong exclusively to the provinces.

●(1135)

The irony of this approach is that the current government is using its spending power excessively and has run up a huge operating deficit, showing complete disdain for the most basic democratic principles and profound distrust of all of the accountability mechanisms established by our parliamentary system.

Business of Supply

[English]

This brings me back to the idea of balance. Balance is what we are severely lacking because the Conservative-Reform government refuses to be fiscally responsible, socially fair and the equitable partner the provinces need and expect. Balance is the crucial determinant of a solid and functional Federation. It is the only way to ensure that all players are equally represented, regardless of size, wealth or background.

[Translation]

Prior to 2006, federal governments of all political stripes tried, in their own way, to work harmoniously with the provinces. The objective was always to ensure equitable, fair transfers in the areas of health and education. Clearly this has not always been easy, nor have the provinces always obtained everything they asked for. However, the search for that balance was certainly a constant during those 143 years of congenial federalism. The prosperous and generous Canada of the 21st century is the brilliant result of the fragile but undeniable equilibrium our governments have always sought to achieve.

That said, in working out my pro-federative and resolutely federalist arguments, I am beginning to understand, though I can never subscribe to their reasoning, why my Bloc Québécois colleagues felt it was important to introduce the motion we are debating today. What they want is a federal government reduced to its simplest form. In the face of the Reform-Conservative government's dictatorial and simplistic approach, it is easy to conclude that it would be better to get rid of any possibility of exercising a power that ignores and holds in contempt the tradition of seeking balance that I was referring to just a moment ago.

[English]

Federal spending power is a critically important means by which the federal government can exercise its responsibility to make Canada a viable political unit and to strengthen it. This is certainly the way Ottawa has traditionally used its spending power under Liberal governments, such as when we introduced the old age security plan, the national health care act, employment insurance and many others.

[Translation]

Canada is not the European Union; Canada is a true federation with constitutional mechanisms and responsibilities that allow it to ensure a certain cohesion among all of its components. Our differences, be they linguistic, geographic or ethnocultural, are a source of wealth and innovation. They define our place in the world and allow us to be creative in the search for solutions. As someone who left Canada after a long stay here once said: "Canada is a solution in search of a problem!"

The Bloc Québécois has its *raison d'être*, and I know for a fact that I am not going to be the one to change its outlook. However, I am no more ready than they are to abdicate the vision I have had of Canada for 32 years, one which has inspired me to pursue the federalist adventure.

The federation we created in 1867 was extremely idealistic. I am convinced that there were not many observers at the time who would have bet on the odds of its success. And yet—

Can we forget that for six years in a row, Canada ranked first among the best countries in which to live? Can we forget that Canada originated the concept of the duty to protect, an obligation which is now the guiding philosophy of the United Nations? Can we forget the sacrifices made by all of our soldiers who fought for democracy?

I understand that the intention of the Bloc Québécois was to score a few symbolic points with a population that has many other concerns in mind. But is this really the type of motion that best represents the interests of Quebecers?

As a proud Canadian and proud Quebecker, I really do not believe that to be the case.

• (1140)

Mrs. Ève-Mary Thäi Thi Lac (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):

Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speech by my colleague from Brossard—La Prairie and it leaves me with a number of questions.

First, given her speech, it comes as no surprise that it was the Liberal Party that unilaterally patriated the Constitution in 1982. The hon. member says that the issue of pension plans is important to her, so when the Bloc Québécois introduced two bills this week to help people who are swindled, I was surprised to see that my colleague remained seated for one and abstained from voting for the other. If this issue is her top priority, as she keeps saying, then I would have liked to see her vote in favour of what the Bloc Québécois was proposing.

The hon. member says we live in a federation. In my view, when Quebec joined, it was a confederation. I am not surprised to hear her use the word "federation" instead of "confederation".

The hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie says that sovereignists are single minded. However, when motions are unanimously passed by the National Assembly, it means that federalist members also voted in favour of these motions. I would like to hear what the hon. member has to say about that. Does the Bloc Québécois represent what the National Assembly adopts, or does it represent only sovereignists?

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her question.

I have no doubt that the National Assembly represents the interests of Quebec. I am not questioning that whatsoever. I know that every provincial government has a stake in defending as much as possible its complete jurisdiction over the vast majority of the programs. Nonetheless, I am also sure that the vast majority of Quebecers like to know that the federal government has a responsibility toward them and that it will try, in negotiating with the provinces, to create optimal conditions for offering all Canadians the best quality of life possible.

That is the goal of a federation and we are a federation. We are not a confederation.

Business of Supply

[English]

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Quebecers and other Canadians across this country have applauded this government's policy of open federalism in which the government respects the founding principles of our country and the Constitution and limits federal spending.

However, the leader of the member's party alleged, in the *Winnipeg Free Press* on March 23, that our style of open federalism would result in a situation where we would return to the strictest definition of the 150-year-old Constitution. He was concerned about an obsessional focus on the jurisdiction and the Constitution.

Would the member opposite please give her opinion on whether this means that her leader would not follow the policies of open federalism and respect for provincial jurisdiction in order to impose his own centralized agenda?

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes: Mr. Speaker, I would share with my hon. colleague a quote from his own leader in his letter to Premier Klein about the possibility of Alberta withdrawing as much as possible from the Federation. He said, "There is no reason to have Ottawa collect our revenue. Any incremental cost of collecting our own personal income tax would be far outweighed by the policy flexibility that Alberta would gain as Quebec's experience has shown".

I imagine that when the Prime Minister mentioned this a few years back to Premier Klein, he was intent on pursuing the Quebec experience of gaining as much autonomy as possible within the Federation.

The fair and equitable share of powers that my colleague has mentioned has always been respected by the Liberal Party. Our main objective as a national party has always been to ensure that Canadians have a fair and equitable chance of having the greatest quality of life possible. That has been our only guiding principle throughout these years, as a government.

• (1145)

[Translation]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): I would like to start by saying that I will be sharing my time with the member for Outremont.

I am pleased to rise today on this motion moved by the member for Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher. I can see that the Bloc want to move this important issue for the future of both Quebec and Canada forward.

This government's intransigence, just like that of its Liberal predecessor, only exacerbates a situation that has dragged on for far too long. This debate resurfaced mainly as a result of the massive cutbacks to social transfers that the Jean Chrétien Liberals made in the mid-1990s. The cutbacks had a major effect on our social services and our fellow citizens. They forced the provinces to reduce spending and slash programs. They hurt everyday people.

[English]

These cuts brought people to believe that their federal government was arrogant and was out of touch with their needs. In the years that followed, the provinces indicated that downloaded responsibilities

the way that the federal government had done onto provinces was not fair. That then cascaded down to municipalities as well, and to communities.

[Translation]

In 2001, the Quebec government set up the Séguin Commission. The commission's mandate was to examine the root causes of the fiscal imbalance between the provinces and the federal government. Despite this imbalance, the federal government did nothing. And we are left grappling with the issue today because the Conservative and previous governments have lacked the will to find a solution. And yet in 2006, the Conservative Party promised to limit the federal government's spending power. Four years later, the Conservative government has failed to do a thing.

As the leader of the first truly pan-Canadian party to recognize the Quebec nation, I am outraged, just like the Bloc and many other Quebecers, by the Conservative government's failure to uphold its commitment to introduce legislation limiting federal spending in Quebec's exclusive areas of jurisdiction. The problem is the Conservative government's inability to work with others. The problem is the government's inability to build consensus before making decisions. And the problem is its lack of leadership.

And that is why the NDP believes in the need for a synergistic system that respects all governments' jurisdictional authority. That is what I told the Premier of Quebec. We believe that Canada can have co-operative, respectful, asymmetrical federalism. Those are the principles of the Sherbrooke declaration adopted in 2005 by members of the NDP. The declaration sets out not only a new relationship between the provinces and the federal government, but also a system of shared sovereignty that respects all governments' areas of jurisdiction. The declaration provides a framework for all NDP discussions on bills involving provincial areas of jurisdiction. Our bill on child care services is a good example of this. The bill gives the Quebec government the right to opt out of this program with full compensation. Now those are realistic solutions.

But we just heard a very simplistic solution to the disagreements between the provinces and the federal government. Last week, the hon. member for Beauce proposed his solution for the federation. He proposed abolishing the federal spending power and suggested Ottawa should withdraw completely from the funding of social programs. He said the federal government should just wash its hands of all that. I am disappointed that for the sole purpose of scoring political points and trying to embarrass the Conservatives, the Bloc would lend a totally undeserved legitimacy to the options suggested by the hon. member for Beauce. We cannot believe the Bloc would endorse the irresponsible language of the hon. member for Beauce.

Although our parties have different approaches to Canada's constitutional future, I thought I shared with the Bloc members a solid commitment to certain social values. It is deeply disturbing, therefore, to see the Bloc align itself with this right-wing ideology that wants to shrink the size of government. It is not very constructive to embarrass the Conservatives at the expense of the public interest.

Business of Supply

I see as well that this motion applies the same recipe to Quebec and the provinces, thereby disregarding the House's unanimous recognition of the specificity of the Quebec nation. It is very surprising to see the Bloc treat Quebec in actual fact the same as any other province. I can understand the desire to place some limits on the federal spending power in Quebec, but it astonishes me to see this extended to the other provinces, which do not want it. With the exception of the Bloc's new companion-in-arms from Beauce, no one in Quebec wants any dismantling of the social safety net from which all our citizens benefit.

• (1150)

[English]

His kind of destructive approach leaves people simply fending for themselves. That is not the Canadian way. Our country was built with people coming together. Our country was built to improve the lives of every Canadian. These are the values that his proposal would take away from the government, and we do not accept it.

[Translation]

Our progress as a society should not be hampered by conflicts resulting from a poor understanding of the federal pact.

We know the government claims it is going to balance the budget by 2016. By then, three major transfers to the provinces will have had to be re-negotiated. The government has already announced that the negotiations are underway.

Once again, there is a danger that the federal government will make major cuts to our social transfers in order to balance the books. We know, though, that provincial expenses are rising faster than the inflation rate. We know the provinces do not have any wiggle room in their budgets. They will not be able to offset any shortfall.

The federal government will have to bring forward flexible agreements that reflect and respect the role and unique responsibilities of the provinces. That is how we can provide Canadians and Quebecers with a federation that meets their expectations.

That is why I cannot support the motion brought forward by the Bloc Québécois, as currently written. That is why my colleague from Outremont will introduce an amendment.

• (1155)

[English]

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the speech of my colleague was certainly an inspiring one. However, it seems the discourse and debate in the House always focuses on that one way communication, that one way communication between the federal government toward the province of Quebec.

By way of illustration, I recently read about what happened back in the 1960s when we decided to set up a national Canada pension program, CPP, and how we worked with Quebec. I was surprised to learn about how much of what we have today nationally came from the politics of Quebec and how far that province had advanced before the rest of the country, probably much the same way that we all benefited from the health care program in the province of Saskatchewan.

I know the member's father was involved in politics. Perhaps he could touch on that as well since he is from Quebec. Perhaps he could talk about the contribution, from a public policy perspective, that Quebec has given to the rest of the country, which we forget to talk about in the House.

Hon. Jack Layton: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the reference to my late father, which brings a smile to my face. He was a strong believer both in Quebec and in Canada as a Quebecer and as a member of the House. In fact, the very first political campaign he involved me in at the age of 12 was the one that established the quiet revolution. Working with Jean Lesage and many others through the process of the 1960s in Quebec, they established some remarkable initiatives from which we could continue to learn elsewhere in Canada.

One thinks of the establishment of Hydro Quebec, which is such a powerful instrument for economic policy, a collective instrument. One thinks of the fact that the largest bank in Quebec is a co-operative enterprise. It is not one of the big Bay Street banks, but it is owned by millions of Quebecers. One thinks of the solidarity fund. One thinks of the fact that there is a child care program in Quebec, which is truly extraordinary.

[Translation]

The examples of social progress that have come out of Quebec are inspiring. Quebecers' creativity and spirit of co-operation are just some of the characteristics that give so much to Canada. This is why we need to have a special approach. We need to tap into Quebecers and recognize the Quebec nation in order to benefit from its initiatives.

Our approach, based on asymmetrical, respectful and co-operative federalism, should be adopted. This was Tommy Douglas' approach in the 1960s—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member for Jeanne-Le Ber.

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was a little disappointed in the speech from the NDP leader, who tried to associate us with the member from Beauce simply because we have used one of his ideas in our proposal. Even a broken clock gives the right time twice a day. That is the case with the proposal from the member for Beauce.

That said, the Bloc Québécois has been proposing the elimination of the so-called spending power since 1993. And now they are saying that we are just playing politics. I would respectfully submit that the most pitiful example of partisan politics was the vote on the gun registry and the manoeuvring done by the leader of the NDP.

If he is open to the Government of Quebec's right to opt out with compensation, why did he not include it in his latest bill on social housing?

Hon. Jack Layton: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his comments. As he knows, we are working with our Bloc colleagues to propose an amendment to the bill concerning social housing and therefore ensure an asymmetrical approach. We are working in a spirit of co-operation and the vote yesterday demonstrated that. That is the NDP's approach.

Business of Supply

•(1200)

[English]

I was a little surprised to hear we were somehow associating the Bloc Québécois with the member for Beauce.

[Translation]

The motion moved by the Bloc Québécois states, "...the government should, as long called for by the Bloc Québécois and now called for by the Member for Beauce..."

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are in fact a number of sometimes fundamental things that separate us in the House. They may be substantive differences relating to the economy or the constitutional future of the country. However, I have always thought that the Bloc Québécois shared a number of fundamental values with the majority of members of this House and the majority of Quebecers and Canadians, a vision that is the opposite of the one put forward by the member for Beauce. On that libertarian vision of "every one for themselves", and the dismantling of the state advocated by the member for Beauce, I would have said even a few days ago that it was the antithesis of what a majority of the Bloc believes. So imagine our surprise to learn that the member for Beauce is the model the Bloc Québécois seeks to emulate, their new idol. It will now be him who dictates their social vision for the future of Quebec and the country.

The member for Jeanne-Le Ber, who just spoke, changed course somewhat and cited the firearms registry as the worst crisis ever seen. Rather than evade the question, I am going to address it directly, because that is another example of the difference in approach between the Bloc and the NDP. In fact, it is a good illustration of what we are seeing today. The difference can be summed up as this: when the NDP sees that there is a fundamental difference, a gulf that separates urban and rural constituencies in our country, it looks for a solution. When the Bloc saw that same division in the country, it tried to profit from it politically. That is the difference between the NDP and the Bloc Québécois.

The Bloc members are so blind to the contradictions they live with, day in and day out, that they do not even realize that by following the example of the member for Beauce they are discrediting themselves in the eyes of all Quebecers, who have always wanted a social safety net, precisely so that the most disadvantaged people, the people who needed it the most, could always count on a government that would be there to help them. Instead, they are proposing that it be dismantled. This is unprecedented. They are going to live with this for a long time, I guarantee it. That is why I am so proud that the leader of the party I represent in the House decided, once again, rather than trying to profit from a division, to stake everything on working constructively, as he always does. As he said, we have acknowledged the pressing need for cooperative, asymmetrical federalism for five years now. We recognize that in these matters, Quebec must have its own voice.

There are three fundamental weaknesses in the Bloc's motion. Their motion, like their approach to the firearms registry, focuses on one thing only: failure. The Bloc Québécois thrives on failure. Everything has to be a failure. If, today, we were to take tangible, constructive and positive action to limit the federal spending power, what would the Bloc complain about tomorrow? The tower of

complaints, the immovable wall of the Bloc must remain. No one must ever remove a brick from the Bloc's wall. The Bloc must always be able to whine about everything at all times. So, it starts with something that it knows is completely unacceptable. How ironic. Only one province has been recognized as a nation. The distinctiveness of the Quebec nation was recognized unanimously. For once, we can do something tangible about it. But no, the Bloc moves that it should apply to all the provinces, even if they have never asked for it. The proposals by their inspirational follower, the member for Beauce, are unacceptable to us. The New Democratic Party, which is always in search of constructive solutions and ways to protect the social safety net of the people in this country, would like to move an amendment.

•(1205)

So I have the honour of moving the following motion, seconded by the leader of our party, the member for Toronto—Danforth:

That the motion of the Bloc be amended by deleting all the words after "That, in the opinion of the House" and substituting the following: in order to honour the commitment to limit the federal spending power in Quebec's exclusive areas of jurisdiction, given the unanimous recognition by this House of the Quebec nation and the longstanding consensus in Quebec in this regard, the government should, so as to implement co-operative and assymetrical federalism:

(a) provide a systematic right to opt out, with full financial compensation and without condition, of all existing and future programs, whether co-funded or not, that intrude into the exclusive jurisdictions of Quebec;

(b) eliminate all federal spending in the exclusive jurisdictions of Quebec once a specific agreement has been reached by mutual consent with the government of Quebec;

(c) transfer, at the request of the Government of Quebec, equivalent fiscal room.

Now, there is a constructive and fruitful motion that people can get behind. That is why the Bloc will probably oppose it, but Canadians and Quebecers will see once again that the NDP has done everything in its power to try to advance Quebec's interests.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I must inform hon. members that an amendment to an opposition motion may be moved only with the consent of the sponsor of the motion. I therefore ask the hon. member for Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher whether he consents to this amendment being moved.

Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Madam Speaker, I do not consent.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): There is no consent. Consequently, pursuant to Standing Order 85, the amendment cannot be moved at this time.

The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé for questions and comments.

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I was surprised to hear our NDP colleague veer so far off topic in his speech. He did not talk about the Bloc Québécois motion, but instead indulged in what we call Quebec bashing or Bloc bashing. I was very surprised at that, coming from the member for Outremont.

Business of Supply

It is clear from his speech that when it comes to giving Quebec the freedom to make its own choices, the Conservatives, the Liberals and the NDP all feel the same way.

The member for Outremont is a former Quebec Liberal MNA and minister. All the governments of Quebec, whether Liberal or Parti Québécois obviously, have called for limiting the federal spending power. Why is he talking all about federalism, which once again runs counter to the unanimous will of the National Assembly—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order. The hon. member for Outremont has the floor.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Madam Speaker, clearly, we are going to have to buy a second earpiece for my colleague, with whom I often enjoy swimming. He obviously still has a lot of water in his ears. If he had heard the motion we put forward today, he would know that it aims to achieve just that, but without following the example of the member for Beauce, who goes across Canada denigrating, decrying and mocking all of Quebec's institutions. Is that their model, the member for Beauce? If that is their model—

• (1210)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Edmonton—St. Albert.

[*English*]

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to the hon. member's speech with great interest.

NDP members like to pretend that if they were ever to take power, a prospect that frightens me, they would respect provincial jurisdiction. However, one of the main planks of their social policy platform is to invade jurisdictions by establishing laws such as the early learning and child care act, which would strip parents of the freedom to raise their children as they see fit and intrude on provincial jurisdiction in education and child care.

Our government prefers the universal child care benefit, which helps all families equally throughout Canada. I wonder if my colleague would explain to us why the party opposed this in budget 2006, and if he would admit that the NDP's proposals only lend credence to the Bloc's argument that federalist parties are always seeking to invade provincial areas of responsibility.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Madam Speaker, this is always my favourite party. Every time its members stand to speak, they contradict themselves in the first five words.

The member just stood and asked whether we did not realize that when we talk about child care we should not be sticking our noses into something that, according to him, is purely provincial. And then, in the very next sentence, he said this was why the Conservative federal government was providing a child care benefit.

What else is wrong with this picture? The Conservatives are unbelievable.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member talked about the nation status of Quebec, talked about Quebec in general, and talked about how it has achieved that nationhood. I agree with him on that. There are certainly a lot of qualities there.

However, one of the interesting things is that we, the newest province in this country, had our own currency, our own dictionary, and many other things of our own. We were of the Dominion.

Does he believe, yes or no, that Newfoundland and Labrador is also a nation within a nation?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Madam Speaker, although I have managed to convey how surprised I am by the Conservatives' questions, I just cannot get over the question posed by my Liberal colleague.

The Liberal Party of Canada voted with the Bloc Québécois, the NDP and the Conservatives to recognize that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada. The specificity of the Quebec nation has been unanimously recognized by this House. If he would like his province to receive the same recognition, I suggest the following: he should talk to the leader of his party, raise the matter and we will see what happens. You know what? He will not do it because his leader will never bring it up. Because of the specificity of its language, historical origins, culture, civil rights, and its other specific institutions, only one province has been recognized as a nation and that province is Quebec.

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Madam Speaker, I heard the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Outremont. Unfortunately, his amendment simply did not hold water, it did not make sense.

We presented this motion because a federation exists between equal people. We are not opposed to federations; it depends on how people are treated. Usually, federations are created by people who consider each other equals. It can be a group of friends, neighbours or merchants. It can be a group of people who are different but who, in all equality, have decided to pool together a number of things. That is the principle and the basic principle is that none of the members of a federation takes precedence over the others. That is the very basis of that political concept.

Let us go back to 1867. It was determined, in a number of territories, that certain governance powers should remain close to citizens. Those entities which are now called the provinces—Quebec was one them—decided to do in their own way everything that affected their citizens directly and closely. That is why the establishment of cities, for instance, has nothing to do with the federal government. It is entities from Quebec and the other provinces that decided to create their own municipal bylaws.

The provinces decided they would keep education and health under their responsibility, as well as social affairs, culture and language, particularly in Quebec, for business relations with entrepreneurs, individual investors and small and medium size businesses, because they felt they were in the best position to look after these matters. They also decided to share a number of things that did not directly affect people or the public, such as the army, defence and borders.

Business of Supply

I come from a family of entrepreneurs, of grocers. When I was very young, my father was an independent grocer. He was in control of his grocery store and no one could tell him what to do. At one point, we joined a co-op, a federation. It was called Les Épiceries Lasalle. Later on, it became Les épiceries Metro, and we pooled a number of things together. However, I can assure hon. members that no one, neither the Metro federation nor any Metro grocer could say anything to the owner of our family store. They had a say about things that were decided together, but certainly not as regards anything else.

As far as the federal government's appropriation is concerned—and here is where we come back to our motion—I get the sense that the federal government finds it easier to ask for forgiveness than to get permission. It encroaches and then takes a wait-and-see approach: if people complain, we will tell them that they have nothing to complain about; and if they do not, we will move in on such and such an area of jurisdiction and present it as a *fait accompli*. There have been many examples of this.

• (1215)

Let me now turn back to the very nature of power. If one has certain powers, one's principles determine whether one keeps or shares them. Things get a little trickier when it comes to using these powers. Money, taxes and levies are required. Things get more nuanced, and discussions or even disputes ensue.

If the money is coming from elsewhere, not from our own pocketbooks, we may be less critical. When children get a Christmas present, it comes from Santa Claus, not from their family. When they are really young, it is the parents who control the purse strings and decide what is best for the child. You often hear children say that they would like this or that, but Santa Claus does not listen to them for their own good. That is all well and good when the child is young and does not have any money, but what happens when the child is a teenager? It is a little tougher, and among adults it is a different story altogether. Everyone here has had the experience of giving children gifts. What do you do when these children are older? You give them money or a check and tell them to use the money as they see fit.

So there is a certain level of maturity required when wielding these powers, which are a gift from someone else. When it is my money and my taxes, I am not going to have someone come along and tell me what to do with it. Nobody is going to tell me how to spend my money. And that is when big problems crop up. There is a difference between being given a house, a car or a cottage with a mortgage, and having a mortgage-free one. At some point, you will ask whether you can decide that you do not want it because you would rather manage the tax field or mortgage yourself.

In Quebec, every government—be it the Parti Québécois government of which I was a part, or the Liberal government the member for Outremont was in when he was in Laval—has repeatedly observed that this spending power was never given to the federal government to be used as it is currently being used.

The result is that the federal government loves to spend. It decides to do this or that because it thinks it is good for Quebecers and Quebec families. Where does it get the cash? From the pockets of Quebecers. That is where it gets its taxes. No more water can be

squeezed out of a sponge than there is in it. At some point, poor Quebec taxpayers start wondering which government is theirs.

If a survey was done across Canada asking Canadians which government was theirs and who their Prime Minister was, they would instinctively say the Government of Canada. In Quebec, though, it would be the Government of Quebec, regardless of who the Premier was and the government in power. We identify much more with Quebec than with Canada.

The federal government invades our tax room. Tax room is a space where there is income from which the government can decide to take a portion. We would rather look for tax room among people earning more than \$150,000 or \$250,000. We said so last year in our pre-budget submissions.

• (1220)

If other provinces do not want that, it is okay, they can do things their way and use their tax room as they see fit. If the Canadian provinces want to give more powers to the federal government, they should do it and give the Government of Canada taxing authority. They may regret it though. In Quebec, that is not how things work. In Quebec, the fiscal imbalance led to the Government of Canada's excessive use of too much tax room. We made the decision in Quebec to pay for social services, education, day care and health care. At some point, there is very little tax room left. It is all gone. When two governments are in the same tax room, we have what is called a fiscal imbalance. It does not come out of nowhere. It happens when governments cannot agree to come to terms on a certain tax room and use it well.

When a government takes advantage of tax room, it is because it is entitled to do something with the money it collects. When there is tax room, people give their government the ability to collect taxes and provide services. When one of the two parties does not merely offer but imposes services and says things will be done its way, and it wants to fund these things with money from our pockets, at some point, a huge problem arises. The fiscal imbalance in Canada was never resolved, regardless of what our Conservative friends might say. We are always aware of that in Quebec. I repeat: all Quebec premiers, whether from the PQ, the Liberals or even the old Union Nationale, have agreed that the fiscal imbalance problem has never been solved. Never. It is an illusion.

Business of Supply

While we wait for a majority of Quebecers to get behind the idea of having a government that uses the entire fiscal room and adopts its own measures in relation to health, social services, education, culture, languages and everything else, what are we doing in the Bloc Québécois? We are working, and for example, under the leadership of the member for Saint-Lambert, we have introduced Bill C-507, which is up for consideration in the House. At the press conference I held with my colleague, I said it was a reasonable accommodation. It is our way to say yes, let us do that while we wait for Quebec to be a sovereign country. What do we say about that? We say that in Quebec, we should have the sovereign, inescapable right to take all of our powers, to prevent the federal government from allowing new spending, to get the federal government out of areas where it has no jurisdiction, and to stop this kind of behaviour. There is one other aspect that we must keep in mind and that is that money must come with those measures. What kind of money? We are not expecting a cheque, we are expecting fiscal room. If someone is delighting in the cheque they got from their parents, or cash as a gift, when they became a teenager or an adult, and then keep expecting such handouts the rest of their lives, at some point they will be waiting a long time. What does a person do? They say: "I am going to create my own fiscal room, I am going to be independent and I am going to create my own wealth."

• (1225)

That is what Quebec wants. The federal spending power should be limited to what it originally was; it should withdraw from the entire room it has invaded since then; and the government of Quebec should get a transfer of tax points and be able to work with them, either by giving the money back to the taxpayers or by using it according to its own standards. We have seen that in the past. The Government of Canada took one or two points off the sales tax. At that time, and that was the same government we have now, the Government of Quebec used it by returning it to the taxpayers of Quebec. That was its decision. Did we agree? That is not the issue, here. It was the government that decided. Personally, I would have liked to use it differently, but we respect the authority and power of the Government of Quebec. It is the federal system that we have a problem with.

Just now, they were making fun of the Bloc Québécois' new guru, but it has to be said that there are mirages in life. Sometimes, there are flashes of brilliance. Sometimes people see UFOs and are convinced they have seen them.

This is what the member for Beauce said:

[English]

Ending the federal spending power, eliminating the federal programs that violate the division of powers, and transferring tax points to the provinces would be the right thing to do from several perspectives.

[Translation]

That is what he said. The speech is on his website, and in it he also said:

Instead of sending money to the provinces, Ottawa would cut its taxes and let them use the fiscal room that has been vacated. Such a transfer of tax points to the provinces would allow them to fully assume their responsibilities, without federal control.

That is not a new guru. That is someone who saw a UFO, and who claims that that is the way it should be. That is what he might have

thought, but it will not happen. The Government of Canada simply does not want to go that way. It is telling us that if we are not happy, we either accept it, or we go away and become sovereign and independent.

Is it the same everywhere in Canada? No; some provinces are perhaps fine with the federal government having control over certain things. Good for them. We do not want that. That is where we differ. When there are conditional transfers, we refuse them. Who has power over whom? That is the question.

Is this a more sensitive issue in Quebec? Perhaps not. Is it different in Quebec? Yes; it is different because we are different. That must be accepted. We will remain in North America. We will continue to do business with Canadians and Americans. We will continue to trade. Canada has Quebec to thank for being so open to the world. However, a nation does not let someone else control its culture, its social development, its education or economic development. Is that simple enough? We cannot accept that Canada acknowledges we exist, but that it retains control over us. In Quebec, we say that we exist, so we will control our own affairs.

• (1230)

Mr. Claude Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member for Hochelaga on his excellent speech, and I thank him for his contribution to our party and to Quebec over the years and particularly since his election, last year.

My colleague is the Bloc Québécois finance critic. Immediately after his election, he met his fellow members and toured Quebec, to fully understand our needs and our interests.

I represent a rural riding where regional development is very important, and we are noticing incredible interference on the part of the federal government in this area. I would like to get my colleague's take on this. If Quebec had total control over its regional development, what difference would it make for a region like eastern Quebec or the Lower St. Lawrence?

• (1235)

Mr. Daniel Paillé: Madam Speaker, I would like to mention the tribute paid to the hon. member earlier this week by his peers. We recognized his great qualities and his contribution to Quebec's agricultural community. He and I are two totally different persons. Yet, we are alike in that we both aspire to a sovereign Quebec.

I used my father's grocery store as an example, but we could also take his own farm. In addition to being an MP, my colleague is a farmer. Would anyone tell him what to do on his farm? No. In eastern Quebec, in the Gaspé Peninsula, in the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, in the North-West of Quebec, in Montreal and in the Eastern Townships, we could tell farmers and the agricultural community that all our revenues and taxes go to a single government, in Quebec City. That is where agricultural policies and support programs would be developed. We would not have to fight with someone who is 5,000 kilometres away. That is the difference. We would be our own masters and we would be the ones deciding what to do with all the taxes and duties.

Business of Supply

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Madam Speaker, our government, led by our Prime Minister, is the only one that can serve the interests of Quebec. For instance, we made a commitment in the 2006 election campaign to restore the fiscal balance between Ottawa and the provinces.

We kept our word and fulfilled that commitment in budget 2007, which was supported by the Bloc Québécois. In May 2006, the leader of the Bloc commended our position and said: “The government’s firm commitment to address the issue and eliminate the fiscal imbalance is a major step forward for Quebec...” Now the Bloc is questioning that major step forward, for purely partisan purposes. Quebeckers deserve better. They want their elected representatives to talk about the economy, not sovereignty.

I have a question for my hon. colleague. Can he tell me why his party wants to eliminate the federal spending power, even though he supported budget 2007?

Mr. Daniel Paillé: Madam Speaker, in response to the hon. member for Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, I would say I agree with one sentence he said near the end of his prepared statement. He probably departed from it when he said: “Quebeckers deserve better.” Yes, Quebeckers do deserve better than what you people are offering. Besides, you will realize this during the next election, my friend, when you are thrown out.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order.

Mr. Daniel Paillé: Madam Speaker, I was giving an impassioned response.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Passion is quite acceptable, but I would ask the hon. member to address all of his impassioned comments to the Chair.

Mr. Daniel Paillé: Madam Speaker, I would be pleased to address my comments to you because that is much more pleasant. I apologize for addressing the hon. member for Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière directly, but I thought he had addressed me directly.

As for Quebec’s interests, people know that in the past six general elections, the majority of Quebeckers voted for the Bloc. Bring on the seventh election and we will see who gets trounced.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Madam Speaker, I see that in the motion, the Bloc is siding with the hon. member for Beauce. There could not be an MP any further to the right.

An hon. member: Yes, that is true.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Look at that. The hon. member from the Bloc agrees with me.

Is the Bloc taking a new direction? This summer, when we were talking about Statistics Canada’s census long form, the leader of the Bloc was prepared to cut employment insurance benefits from people who did not fill out the form. He was prepared to take away from workers the employment insurance benefits they need to feed their families. Right in front of the media, the leader of the Bloc said he was prepared to take away passports or employment insurance benefits, the very livelihood families depend on.

Where does the Bloc stand today? Where does the leader of the Bloc stand today? Is he on the right now? We are certainly seeing that once again today in the Bloc motion, which sides with the hon. member for Beauce. I am starting to get worried. Quebeckers should be worried and start asking questions.

• (1240)

Mr. Daniel Paillé: Madam Speaker, I would like to reassure the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst. I love his speeches and I would like to reassure him.

No, we have not turned to the right like the hon. member for Beauce. We will not be joining him. In my speech, I said that he was deluding himself. He thinks that is how Canada might think, but in 1867. That Constitution no longer exists. The Liberals repatriated it in 1982, but no Quebec government has ever accepted it.

So I want to reassure him, because when he speaks so passionately, he goes red, and I would not like to see the hon. member have a problem here in the House. So let me reassure him that we have not taken a turn to the right.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, CPC): Madam Speaker, I completely agree with what the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst said about passports. The Bloc Québécois made our blood boil this summer. I want to keep my passport; I see it as a benefit.

Can my esteemed colleague opposite explain to me why the Bloc wants to do away with the spending power at the same time as he is asking the federal government to increase all transfers to the provinces?

Mr. Daniel Paillé: Madam Speaker, I will just say to the hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou that it is our money, and I pay taxes to Canada. I keep paying and I abide by the law. There have been two referendums, and even though one of them was stolen from us, we accepted the result and we continue to pay our taxes. Transfer payments are part of the existing structure. I want to do away with the federal spending power because it is not used in the way I want. I want to control it, because I feel sure that the hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou would, at home in an independent Quebec, be better able to ensure the development of her fellow citizens than is presently the case with two layers of government. Sadly, when that happens, the hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou will no longer be here.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Madam Chair, it is a great pleasure to rise in the House today to discuss this important matter. I would like to thank my colleagues for having raised this issue.

It is interesting to see that today, the Bloc is attempting to support a theory that it opposes in practice. Every day, the Bloc rises in the House of Commons to advocate for a bigger role for and more spending by the federal government, a bigger role for the federal level, which means a bigger role for Quebeckers.

Business of Supply

The Bloc wants the federal government to spend more, and consequently wants it to get more deeply involved in employment insurance, the arts, education, health, equalization payments, sports, and the list goes on. Every day, we see the Bloc rising in the House in order to ask for more money and more federal expenditures for all Canadians, including Quebecers.

In fact, I cannot even think of one single occasion where the Bloc asked for a reduction in spending or the elimination of a federal program.

Given that record, it would be appropriate to change the name of their party and call it the Centralist Bloc. It is really one of the most centralist parties in the House of Commons. It is not difficult to understand why the Bloc is ready to work in a coalition with the Liberals, a party that is also a centralist party, and the New Democrats, the most hyper-centralist party in the House.

The three coalition parties support the infinite expansion of federal programs and expenditures. Thus, the Bloc motion we are studying today would forbid practically all of the demands made by the Bloc each and every day.

We Conservatives focus on real results rather than rhetorical and contradictory debates. Take the results we have already delivered for Quebecers, such as a seat at UNESCO, the resolution of the fiscal imbalance, and the parliamentary recognition of the Quebec nation.

In addition, we are completing the implementation of our economic action plan. This plan worked extremely well. It has been recognized around in the world as having allowed us to avoid the worst repercussions of the global recession, which were much more serious in other countries.

Thanks to our plan and our Prime Minister's actions, we were able to avoid the worst consequences, which we saw in other countries. We have created almost 400,000 jobs since our economy started to rebound from recession-related losses.

We funded thousands of projects throughout Canada, including in Quebec. It is interesting and even encouraging that, despite having fought against these projects, the Bloc Québécois is now saying that they should be extended.

It is interesting to note that the projects our government funds in Quebec under our economic action plan would have been prohibited by the theory now being advocated by the Bloc Québécois. It is passing strange that the Bloc wants to forbid the very same projects that it now wants to see extended. I do not know how you can extend a project you wish to prohibit. These are the contradictions of the Bloc Québécois. They are inexplicable.

I will continue to talk about the concrete results our government is delivering for all Canadians.

• (1245)

[*English*]

I want to talk about the tax-free savings account, probably one of the most revolutionary tax changes in modern Canadian history, the most important change in tax savings since the introduction of the RRSPs.

As I understand it, the Bloc Québécois is not fond of the tax-free savings account, but we in the Conservative Party have introduced this vehicle for savings. How has it worked? Do members know how many Canadians have opened tax-free savings accounts? Five million Canadians have opened tax-free savings accounts and they have accumulated, in one year since those accounts have opened, \$18 billion in savings.

All of the interest, dividends and capital gains on that \$18 billion will all be tax free, meaning it will go back in the pockets of the hard-working and responsible Canadians who set it aside for their futures. They will have the ability to take that money out and use it to invest in a new home or to purchase a second residence. After they have done that, they will be allowed to put that money back in the account without any penalty and, when they put it back, they will be able to once again fill the room that they vacated when taking it out, and, of course, enjoy into perpetuity tax-free gains on their money.

I just finished describing the benefits to the savers of these accounts, but what about the benefits to the overall economy? When people put this money into their tax-free savings accounts, they are not just sliding it under their mattresses and waiting for it to collect dust. They are actually investing it in companies through mutual funds that invest in equities. Those companies are then able to hire more people with that money and to create more jobs, more wealth and more growth for our country.

Sometimes people will put it in savings accounts at banks. Those savings accounts are then used by the financial institutions to lend out that same money into the economy to a small business person or to someone else who needs it, so that they can go off and create economic opportunities and jobs. Therefore, the \$18 billion are an investment into our Canadian economy and it is a tax-free benefit that will literally pay dividends for generations and generations to come.

We have also introduced reductions in taxation on job creators. When I say job creators, I mean the companies that go out and hire thousands of people in order to carry out the daily operations of their enterprises. We are lowering their tax rates from 22% to 15%, a one-third reduction, which will mean that Canada will be the lowest taxed place in the G7 to carry out business, and by business I am referring again to those job creators.

Because of those policies, we have created 400,000 jobs. As the House leader of our government often says, that is 400,000 phones that rang, and when a person picked it up the voice at the other end of the line said, "You have the job. You are hired". That is probably the most joyous phone call an unemployed Canadian could get.

Our focus over here is on lowering taxes on job creators so that job creators can do what they do best. In other words, we believe the government should lay off the job creators so that job creators can create jobs, rather than having the government tax those job creators who then have to lay off employees. That is the approach of our government and we will continue to create jobs through our policy of lower taxes.

Business of Supply

However, our tax reductions have not been limited to job creators. We have cut taxes for consumers by lowering the GST from 7% to 5%. We have lowered income taxes. We brought in tax credits for kids' sports, students' textbooks, tradesmen's tools, seniors and passengers' bus passes. All of these activities now have special tax credits that help people keep more money as they go about their daily lives.

• (1250)

We had a very successful home renovation tax credit, that created thousands of jobs in the renovation, roofing, carpentry and, frankly, the forestry sector. The Bloc Québécois voted against it and after voting against it, it claimed that it was its idea in the first place. In fact, all the opposition coalition parties voted against the home renovation tax credit at various times and later claimed that they had come up with the idea in the first place.

It is an interesting way to come up with an idea, by voting against it, but that is okay. We consider it encouragement. In fact, we are quite flattered when people who have opposed our ideas in the past want to adopt them as their own in the present.

We have done all of this with the view to help middle class, ordinary families to put dollars back into the pockets of normal, everyday working people. That is why we brought in a different approach to child care, which was a \$1,200 per year child care allowance.

• (1255)

[*Translation*]

Now, the Bloc Québécois wants to introduce a bill in the House on spending power, a bill that would eliminate the Canada child tax benefit. The Bloc Québécois is saying that the federal government should no longer provide this benefit. The Bloc Québécois members are saying that this program encroaches on the jurisdiction of another level of government.

With this motion, the Bloc would eliminate this child tax benefit. The Quebec MPs who worked on implementing this program, including the member for Lévis and the two members for Beauce, have never mentioned Quebecers calling their offices to complain about this benefit. Every Quebec family is in favour of the Canada child tax benefit. The same goes for my constituency. All my voters are in favour of this extremely popular program, which has given children a choice. The Bloc wants to take this choice away from children by introducing a motion that would deny the federal government its spending power in this area. I would like to know how many of their voters would be happy about the cancellation of this benefit, as the Bloc Québécois proposes.

We have a great opportunity to hear from one of the best MPs in the House, the hon. member for Lévis—Bellechasse. I would like to share my time with him and I hope he will continue to speak about this topic.

The Conservative Party will continue to meet Quebecers' expectations and to respect every provincial jurisdiction, as it has always done. We are going to continue to meet the expectations of families, taxpayers and all Canadians.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I regret to inform the member that it is too late to announce that he wishes to share his time.

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by the Conservative member, whose job is to create diversions. He spoke about measures such as the Canada child tax benefit. He even spoke about TFSA's. That is a diversion tactic.

I remind the member that on December 19, 2005 in Quebec City his leader, the Prime Minister, made a formal commitment regarding the federal spending power. With his hand on his heart, he said:

I have said many times, even since the election of this new government, that I am opposed and our party is opposed to federal spending power in provincial jurisdictions. In my opinion, such spending power in the provinces' exclusive jurisdictions goes against the very spirit of federalism.

How can the member say today that he is opposed to a Bloc Québécois motion that is clearly in the spirit of the comments made by the Prime Minister on December 19, 2005?

• (1300)

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, we have kept all of our promises and followed through on all of our commitments to Quebec. I would like to know whether there is a single program that we are currently funding that the Bloc Québécois would want to see cancelled. We work well with the Quebec government, with its consent, to deliver thousands of projects included in Canada's economic action plan.

Why does the Bloc Québécois rise daily and repeatedly to ask the federal government to increase spending and expand programs that fall directly under provincial jurisdiction?

At the same time, it says it wants to eliminate the role of the federal government in those areas. The Bloc must decide where it really stands. Question period is in an hour, and I imagine that a Bloc Québécois member will rise to ask for more money or another federal program for Quebecers. Then that member will vote in favour of a motion such as this one, which conflicts with those very actions. The Bloc Québécois really must choose one or the other. Otherwise, we will be fully justified in continuing to refer to it as a centralist party.

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to commend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs for his excellent speech, his vision, and his understanding of the issues in Quebec and Quebec's importance in the Canadian federation.

I would also like to tell him that I share his vision and that I am opposed to the motion put forward by the Bloc Québécois today. This motion is based on a narrow, simplistic and ideological vision, which has been keeping Quebec on the backbenches for far too long.

Business of Supply

Fortunately, with this government's help, a number of members have been able to initiate major changes for Quebec, such as correcting the fiscal imbalance. This was done here, with Conservative MPs from Quebec like my hon. colleague from Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister of Canada. This was done thanks to a government which understands and respects Quebec and its prerogatives, and wants to maintain the kind of spirit of open federalism it has shown in recognizing Quebec as a nation.

I have a very simple question for my hon. colleague. We know that the Liberals slashed transfers to the provinces. They unilaterally patriated the Constitution, which is absolutely scandalous in a country like ours. We in this government are busy working. As members know, on top of Canada's economic action plan, which was supported by the Conservative members but opposed by the Bloc, we have maintained transfers to the provinces at record levels, be it for health or education, at a time when we were going through the worst economic crisis ever.

My question is for the parliamentary secretary. It is true that Quebec has never received as much money in transfer payments from the Canadian government as it has under the current Conservative government?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, there can be no doubt that the Conservative Party, together with members such as the hon. member from Lévis—Bellechasse, is meeting Quebecers' expectations. Every day, the Bloc Québécois and its leader rise in the House to ask the federal government to play a more significant role in Quebecers' lives.

I have some quotes here. On December 15, 2005, the Bloc asked the federal government to play a more significant role in education. On February 21, 2008, it asked the federal government to play a more significant role in post-secondary education. In 2006, it claimed it was in favour of child benefits, but those benefits would not be allowed if the Bloc Québécois motion were carried today.

It is interesting how, every day, the Bloc Québécois asks the federal government to spend more on the arts and in other areas. I have never seen the Bloc Québécois oppose federal spending. It is in favour of all expenditures and it wants the federal government to contribute. It even demands more federal spending and a bigger government in Ottawa.

This is all part of the fundamental Bloc paradox. The party claims to be pro-sovereignty, but it has been here in Ottawa for 17 years. This shows Canadians that their country does work and that Quebec plays an extremely important role. We are very proud to have Quebec as part of our proud, united country. As a Canadian, I am celebrating with the hon. members here the great success that Canada represents.

• (1305)

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, in today's Bloc Québécois opposition day debate on federal government spending power, there is nothing new.

We have been calling for limits on federal government spending since 1993. Successive Quebec governments, from the time of Robert Bourassa through to the era of Jean-Jacques Bertrand—not to

mention every member of the Parti Québécois—have consistently called for limits to be set on the federal government's power to spend.

In fact, allow me to quote a former Quebec premier. He said, "Quebec continues to believe that this power to spend in solely provincial areas of jurisdiction should quite simply not exist, and that the federal government just needs to let it go."

And it was not a sovereigntist who said that. Robert Bourassa, a federalist, made the statement in 1970. So this is nothing new. One certainly cannot label Mr. Bourassa a sovereigntist, and yet I hear the Conservatives, Liberals and even occasionally the NDP saying that the Bloc only moved this motion in order to promote Quebec sovereignty. Of course we are sovereigntists. However, this motion is simply about limiting the federal government's spending power.

When the time comes to vote on Tuesday, I hope that members, and in particular members from Quebec, will realize that this request to limit federal government spending power has been made repeatedly by Quebec for many years.

It is also important to remind members of this House—particularly Quebec members on the government side and those in the Liberal party who, when power appears to be within reach, seem to once again favour highly centralist positions—that there is a strong consensus in Quebec that Ottawa must stop interfering in areas of jurisdiction that are not its own.

I would also like to mention something that I failed to indicate at the start of my speech: I will be sharing my time with the member for Joliette.

Now, back to the debate. As I said, all governments—from Jean Jacques Bertrand's to Robert Bourassa's, right through to Jean Charest's, as well as all the sovereigntist PQ governments—want control of all the tools they need to better meet the needs of Quebecers; there is unanimous agreement that federal spending power must be limited.

Over the years, Ottawa has cheerfully gone about spending money in areas of jurisdiction that are not its own, areas that are the responsibility of Quebec and the provinces. And yet, this spending power that Ottawa has appropriated for itself across all of these areas, which are supposed to be the exclusive purview of Quebec and the provinces, causes problems and raises numerous obstacles.

The result is that Canada dictates to Quebec much of what it should or should not do in all its fields of jurisdiction. That is the big problem. That is an issue because in Canada there is more than one nation. There is the Canadian nation and the Quebec nation, recognized here in the House, symbolically of course, not to forget the aboriginal nations.

Through the spending power, the Canadian nation imposes its views on the Quebec nation. Every time Ottawa creates a program or spends in a field of Quebec jurisdiction, it is Canada deciding how Quebec society will be organized and structured and how programs will be implemented in Quebec. In many cases, whether in regard to health, regional development or education, there is all kinds of duplication.

Business of Supply

•(1310)

Sometimes we have debates here about big national mental health programs, but in Quebec, all the regions and local community service centres, as well as the provincial health and social services department, have their own programs. The result is duplication, which costs huge amounts of money, instead of investments in improving health. All kinds of money is wasted. Every time Ottawa sets conditions before making transfers to Quebec, it forces the Quebec government to implement Canadian priorities rather than Quebec priorities. That is the problem that always arises.

Here is a case in point. Parental leave is a major issue that the Bloc Québécois debated in the House for many years. Nearly 20 years ago, the Government of Quebec wanted to institute a suitable parental leave system. The problem was that Ottawa was already using its spending power to intercede through employment insurance. To create its program, Quebec therefore had to get the money already being used by Ottawa. At the time, Ottawa refused. In 1996, the Quebec National Assembly voted unanimously in favour of these parental leaves. Still Ottawa said no. We all remember the Liberal government of the time cutting social programs. Unfortunately, the Liberals apparently still embrace this centralizing approach because the signs are all that they will vote today against the Bloc motion, although I hope not. So the Liberals have learned nothing. The Conservatives made false promises, and the New Democrats have centralizing policies, a little like the Liberals, and are prepared to poke their noses into jurisdictions that are none of their business.

To come back to parental leave, five years later, the National Assembly unanimously passed the bill creating parental leave. As you will have guessed, Ottawa, true to form, again said no. We had to be patient, at that time, and wait five more years to see legal action by the Government of Quebec and the election of Paul Martin's minority government, with the Bloc Québécois at its heels, for Quebec, after 23 years of hard-fought battle, to finally achieve its parental leave program. All of the members from Quebec who are present here can confirm this. That program is very popular and it is no accident that the number of births has been rising since it was implemented. This is one example, but let us not forget that there is not a single area under Quebec's jurisdiction that has not been invaded by Ottawa.

The Conservative member made me laugh when he talked about family policy. He said that if we limited the federal spending power, we could say good-bye to the child tax benefit. We are only talking about transfers. That money, which is paid by Ottawa, would be better managed by Quebec in a family allowance program, for example. The Conservative members turn a deaf ear and act like hypocrites when they say they are in favour of limiting the federal spending power, as their leader said during the election campaign and in various speeches since then, with which the member from Beauce seems to agree. We see here that the Conservative government could take advantage of all the positions it has taken in recent years and vote in favour of the motion by the Bloc Québécois.

We are talking about areas under Quebec's exclusive jurisdiction, family policy, health, education, or regional development. These are examples of mistakes made by the federal government. In 2008-

2009, the federal government spent over \$60 billion in areas that are within the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. That figure is quite telling. It also shows that the fiscal imbalance has not been resolved. As the Séguin report said, the problem of the federal spending power is closely connected with the discussion of the fiscal imbalance.

•(1315)

In closing, I urge all members in the House to vote in favour of this motion, which Quebec has been calling for for many decades.

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his excellent speech.

We have been debating since this morning and it feels good to finally hear something rational and logical, to have a coherent discussion. This morning, the NDP pathetically tried to say that the Bloc is taking advantage of this opposition day to talk about an issue that has been of concern to it since 1993 and that was brought back into the news recently by the hon. member for Beauce, and that suddenly, the Bloc has become a right wing party and a fan of the hon. member for Beauce. The utterly ridiculous thing about that is that the NDP will be voting with the Conservatives. If we follow their partisan logic, the NDP is becoming a right wing party since its members are voting with the Conservatives on this motion. This rationale only goes so far.

Does my colleague think that the strategy the NDP used this morning is nothing but a diversion to avoid speaking to the heart of the matter, namely that it is a centralizing party to the extreme? We saw that recently with the social housing bill, where they voluntarily excluded the possibility of opting out for Quebec. They had done that in the past for other bills and they chose not to take that route.

Is this not just a diversion and is that not the most centralizing party in the House?

Mr. Guy André: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for that excellent question.

I was in the House and I heard the NDP speech. I was not very surprised, because the NDP considers itself a very progressive party. We saw that it was very aware of Quebec's need to opt out of social housing programs. We also saw this when the vote on gun registry was held. A very progressive party would have taken a stronger unanimous stand on that issue.

All the federalists—the NDP, the Liberals and the Conservatives—are against giving the Quebec nation the right to make its own choices and determine its own future. They have also opposed all the governments of Quebec since 1970. Even earlier, Jean-Jacques Bertrand, a former premier of Quebec, did the same thing. So it is not surprising to see the attitude of the NDP and the other parties in the House toward Quebec's needs and interests.

•(1320)

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Madam Speaker, I watched my colleague on television in my office. I have introduced a bill that would help crime victims' families, but the government, with its ideology, would rather punish criminals than help victims' families.

Business of Supply

With this proposal to transfer tax points to Quebec, can my colleague tell us whether the government would be helping victims to the same extent as Quebec, without Quebec always having to beg for money and depend on the federal government?

Mr. Guy André: Madam Speaker, with its management of young offenders and its innovative social services and health care system, Quebec is showing that it can do an exemplary job of taking care of its own affairs.

All the parties in the House and all the other provinces often look to Quebec when introducing intervention models, whether for youth or in the areas of health care and child care.

If Quebec were a sovereign nation, it would take back all the economic and social levers a nation should have. I am certain that it would do an outstanding job and that it could serve as a model for all the other provinces.

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to be taking part in the debate on the motion moved by the member for Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher. I am also honoured to support this motion. And because I believe it is important, I will mainly focus on demonstrating why the amendment proposed by the NDP is completely contrary to our motion, to Quebec's traditional position and to the promise made by the Prime Minister during the 2006 election campaign. The member for Beauce seems to have understood this promise.

I would like to reread the motion and explain it paragraph by paragraph.

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should, as long called for by the Bloc Québécois and now called for by the Member for Beauce, end the so-called federal spending power in the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces, eliminate the federal programs that violate the division of powers, and transfer tax points to the provinces...

This part is verbatim; it is exactly what the member for Beauce said. We give it our full endorsement. The fact is there is no constitutional basis for the pseudo-spending power that the federal has given itself. It is simply because of the fiscal imbalance that the federal government has been able to interfere—and it has been interfering for decades, since the end of the second world war, to be exact—in areas of jurisdiction that do not belong to it but that belong to Quebec and the provinces. This situation needs to be corrected.

Next, the motion details the way in which the Government of Quebec, the Quebec nation, the Bloc Québécois and the National Assembly are asking that the situation be corrected. The motion reads:

a) eliminating all federal spending in the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces, unless express authorization is given by Quebec or the province;

Here we have reversed the traditional *modus operandi* of Canadian federalism, which is a dead end in that regard. Instead of the provinces being the ones to ask the government not to interfere in their areas of jurisdiction, the federal government must ask permission if it wants to intrude into jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces. If authorization is not given by Quebec or the province, it simply will not happen. It seems to me that unfortunately, the NDP leader did not fully understand this point. Regarding the Bloc Québécois motion, he said—and I am paraphrasing from the letter he sent to the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, the leader of the

Bloc Québécois—that he did not understand why our motion, which applies the same formula to Quebec and the other provinces, disregards the fact that this House unanimously recognized the distinctive nature of the Quebec nation and is trying to impose Quebec's wishes on the rest of Canada.

That is completely false.

Quite clearly, we are reversing the traditional relationship between the federal government and Quebec and the provinces by putting the onus on the federal government. However, any provinces that want the federal government to continue interfering in their areas of jurisdiction are free to allow it to do so. Once again, if Quebec or another province says that it is out of the question, for example, that the federal government interfere in its jurisdiction over community based child care programs and family policy, since these are social matters, which the Canadian Constitution has delegated to the provinces, the answer would be no.

The next part says:

b) providing a systematic right to opt out with full financial compensation and without condition of all existing and future programs, whether co-funded or not, that intrude into jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces.

Once again, no one is forcing the other provinces. We understand very well that since provinces are nothing more than administrative divisions within the same nation, the Canadian nation, this nation would choose the federal government as its central government. We have no problem with that. We recognize that. However, the central government of the Quebec nation is the Government of Quebec, and its legislative arm is the Quebec National Assembly. So if Quebec wants to opt out of a program that falls under its jurisdiction, it must not only have the right to opt out, but must also be adequately compensated, with no conditions. That is the infamous opting out clause.

The motion goes on to say:

c) transferring, at the request of Quebec or a province, fiscal room in the form of tax points and/or GST to replace the amounts that the province would otherwise have received under the Canada Health Transfer, federal programs in its areas of jurisdiction and the transfer for social programs and postsecondary education indexed to 1994-1995 levels.

● (1325)

Once again, no one is forcing the provinces to do anything, and what the NDP leader said is completely untrue. If the other provinces do not want to convert the cash transfers they currently receive from the federal government into fiscal room, that is up to them.

We believe that this would benefit us, because we would not have a sword of Damocles hanging over our heads when a federal government has difficulties. Right now, it has problems with the deficit, which is at record highs. Cuts are sure to come. The Minister of Finance is hiding. It is clear that he must find a new strategy, such as eliminating corporate tax cuts, which was announced, but we have yet to see it happen. If the solution does not come from revenues, it will have to come from spending. It will be the same story as under the Liberals, when they plundered the employment insurance fund and cut transfers to the provinces or to individuals.

We prefer to have tax room that we can manage ourselves. We would no longer have to fear the kinds of unilateral decisions we have experienced in the past. I remember 1994-95 very well. We would prefer this financial autonomy. Let us recall that this was part of the plan to eliminate the fiscal imbalance that the Séguin Commission, the Government of Quebec, the National Assembly of Quebec, the Bloc Québécois and everyone in Quebec have been demanding for such a long time.

Let us recall that the plan has three components. First, transfers must be brought back to pre-1994-95 levels indexed to inflation. Members will recall how Paul Martin, the Minister of Finance in Chrétien's Liberal government, decided to solve his deficit problems by offloading them onto the provinces. Transfers must be restored to the levels they were at before the cuts.

Second, the tax room represented by those amounts, indexed at 1994-95 levels, must be transferred in tax points and GST points.

Third, in order to be sure that the fiscal imbalance does not reappear in a few years or decades, we need more than guidelines. We must eliminate the so-called federal spending power in areas under the jurisdiction of the provinces and of Quebec.

Our proposal is extremely reasonable. We are not forcing other provinces to withdraw from federal programs in areas under their jurisdiction. We are not forcing them to clear the tax room that is the equivalent of government cash transfers, if they want to remain dependent on the federal government. I understand that, because, for those provinces, the central State is Ottawa. But for Quebec, Quebec City is the State responsible for conducting the affairs of our nation. We have introduced a bill dealing with the elimination of the so-called federal spending power. That spending power has no constitutional basis, as the hon. member for Beauce rightly reminded us.

Federal intrusion into all areas of provincial jurisdiction in Canada came to \$62 billion in 2008-09. That is a lot of money. That is a lot of intrusion into the exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces and of Quebec. As I have just mentioned, there is consensus on that in Quebec.

I would have liked to have quoted Benoît Pelletier, a federalist. He wrote exactly what I have just said in *Le Devoir* on January 19, 2008. I provide the date so that hon. members can refer to it should they wish.

As for the proposal that the leader of the New Democratic Party made to us, he wanted to replace our motion in its entirety with:

...to honour the commitment to limit the federal spending power—although we wish to “eliminate” rather than “limit”—in Quebec's exclusive areas of jurisdiction, given the unanimous recognition by this House of the Quebec nation and the longstanding consensus in Quebec in this regard, the government should, in order to implement a co-operative and asymmetrical federalism:

If there is no constitutional basis for the federal spending power at present, then the situation is inconsistent with the Constitution. Therefore, there is no need to implement a co-operative or asymmetrical federalism; we need only respect the Constitution of 1867.

I will continue to read the motion proposed by the Leader of the New Democratic Party.

Business of Supply

(a) provide a systematic right to opt out, with full financial compensation and without condition, of all existing and future programs, whether co-funded or not, that intrude into the exclusive jurisdictions of Quebec;

We agree and this is part (b) of our motion.

(b) eliminate all federal spending in an exclusive jurisdiction of Quebec after entering into a specific agreement by mutual consent with the Government of Quebec;

What that means is that we will allow the federal government to interfere and if we do not have an agreement with the federal government, this interference will continue for all time. That is not what we are asking for.

(c) transfer, at the request of the Government of Quebec, equivalent fiscal room.

But equivalent to what? We do not know.

● (1330)

Our proposal is much clearer. As my colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé said, this is quite simply a flimsy excuse to vote against our motion. Quebecers will not accept that.

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Madam Speaker, we currently have several infrastructure projects that will not meet the March 31, 2011, deadline. We have put questions to the minister about that on a number of occasions.

With this motion about transferring tax points to Quebec, does the member not think that, with all that money, which represents approximately \$62 billion per year, this kind of problem would not arise and we would not be at the mercy of the federal government when it comes to getting our share for our infrastructure?

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question. One thing is clear, and that is that for each federal transfer, whether in Quebec's exclusive field of jurisdiction or a field of shared jurisdiction with Ottawa, negotiations drag on and are painstaking. This results in situations like the one we are currently experiencing with regard to infrastructure, where we are basically in a straitjacket.

Why is it so difficult for work to be completed by March 31, 2011? We know that one third of all projects are in jeopardy. That represents \$200 million. The reason is simple: it has taken the federal government months to face the fact that Quebec has to be the one in charge of its infrastructure.

I think that, if we kept all our tax revenues and had full legislative authority, basically if Quebec were sovereign, there would not be this enormous waste of time. It took Quebec 30 years to regain its powers with regard to manpower. Those powers belonged to Quebec. Education is a Quebec jurisdiction. Yet it took the federal government 30 years to accept to give that back to Quebec. That is what federalism is all about. Waste of time, waste of money and squandering.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will put a very simple question to my hon. colleague. If he believes that Quebec should be autonomous, independent and what not, what is he waiting for to go to Quebec City and work on achieving independence for Quebec?

Business of Supply

•(1335)

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Madam Speaker, my answer to the hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup is that it is because we are democrats.

Before the Bloc Québécois came to in Ottawa, there was a problem with democracy. There were sovereignists and nationalists, people who did not trust the Conservative Party, the Liberal Party or the New Democratic Party. They had no choice; they either voted for one of those parties or they abstained. The Bloc Québécois has broken through this inconsistency and now allows people who do not trust those parties to vote for the one and only party that protects Quebecers' interests and values. So, we can state that an undemocratic situation has been rectified and democracy in Quebec and in Canada has been improved. The proof that it has been improved is that, since the Bloc Québécois has come into existence, Quebecers have sent a majority of Bloc members to the House seven times. That is why I am here—to strengthen democracy in Quebec and in Canada. I hope this is clear for the hon. member.

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member for his excellent speech.

Could he tell me why, although all Quebec governments have agreed for decades that the federal spending power should be limited, we will still see members—elected to this House by Quebecers—vote against the Bloc Québécois motion?

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Madam Speaker, once again I would like to thank the hon. member from the constituency of Berthier—Maskinongé that neighbours mine. I feel that he did a great job following up on the comments I made earlier.

We cannot trust Canadian parties, federalist parties, that consider interests and values other than those of the Quebec nation. It might be in the interest of the Canadian nation to have a very powerful, large central government, but it is not in the interest of the Quebec nation to have such strong powers in Ottawa, to have interference from the federal government, to have a so-called federal spending power, and to also have this fiscal imbalance that results in insufficient resources for the National Assembly, the Quebec government, to carry out its duties.

We are here to represent those interests. Once again, all the parties in the National Assembly, whether federalist or sovereignist, are in favour of addressing the fiscal imbalance and eliminating the federal spending power. Unfortunately, Quebec MPs in federalist and Canadian parties have their hands tied by the Canadian nation and the majority they represent within their parties.

[English]

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to take part in the debate on the opposition motion brought forward by the Bloc Québécois. The motion in essence seeks to restrict federal spending authority in areas of provincial jurisdiction and allow provinces to opt out of federally funded programs with full compensation and without conditions. This is not a new topic. It has been discussed in the House, at committees of the House and in reports from committees for many years.

We are a federated nation. We are a very fortunate nation. As a federated nation, I often think that the nature of our Confederation is both a blessing and a burden of being Canadian. It is never easy. I think of Winston Churchill's famous comment about democracy when he said that it was the worse system in the world except for all the rest. When we add Confederation to a democracy, it is the best system in the world, but in part it is messy. It is not always easy. We have become a nation that is the envy of the world in many areas.

Pre-Confederation, Canada was born of compromise. Canada was a group of bodies that came together. In 1867 Quebec, Ontario, the great and wonderful and at the time rich province of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick came together. It was a unique coming together and it has borne a lot of envy from people around the world.

I grew up in the United Kingdom. My father decided to come to Canada, and he chose it for a very specific reason. He believed in what Canada stood for. When he arrived here in the late 1960s, as a medical doctor, he became part of the new national experiment of medicare under Lester Pearson and the Liberal government.

There is a balance albeit a delicate balance. Canada has shown over and over again that it is more than the sum of its parts on things like health care, our national system of pensions, even things like employment insurance. There is a long and strong history of Canada making improvements through the federated model of coming to the table and making things work.

A big change to medicare came in 2004 when Prime Minister Paul Martin signed a deal with the provinces to put \$46 billion into health care over 10 years, which was a huge investment. It took a lot of negotiation and consultation. Canada's priorities were determined. It was determined that we should improve upon five key areas. Money went into health care and all the provinces understood that. Hard questions will have to be asked as that comes up for renegotiation in 2014.

The member for Beauce suggested that \$40 plus billion should be taken out of the federal transfers and that there should be no federal involvement in those transfers or in the work that those transfers do. It is consistent with what we have come to believe from the Prime Minister. A number of years ago he called for what is now referred to as the Alberta firewall. There is a history and a bit of an alliance between the governing Conservatives and the Bloc on this as to the role of Canada in part of those negotiations.

There are hard questions to be asked in health care. I will be the first to suggest that some of those questions will be a bit messy. We have to consider the changing demographics. We have to understand that Canadians are getting older. We have to understand that health care is gobbling up more and more of the public dollar. We have to figure out the role of the federal government.

The federal government has a big role to play. The federal government has not only the opportunity, but the responsibility to be involved in those discussions and to ensure that the priorities of the health care system reflect national issues and are adaptable to provincial interests. There is a model for that.

Back in 2004, when I was first elected to the House, the government, under the then minister of social development, developed a national child care plan with all of the provinces. That is an example of how government can work in our country.

● (1340)

I want to read from a press release from October 28, 2005, “Governments of Canada and Quebec Sign First Funding Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care”. The first paragraph reads:

Prime Minister Paul Martin and Quebec Premier Jean Charest, along with federal Social Development Minister... [the member for York Centre], Quebec's Minister of Families, Seniors and the Status of Women Carole Th  berge, President of the Privy Council and Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Lucienne Robillard, and Quebec's Minister of Canadian Intergovernmental Affairs Beno  t Pelletier, announced today an historic agreement concerning the transfer of \$1.125 billion over five years under the federal government's Early Learning and Child Care Initiative. This is the first funding agreement the Government of Canada has signed under the Early Learning and Child Care Initiative.

It is an indication of how federalism can work and how the federal government can work with the provinces to make improvements in society.

My former colleague, the hon. Lucienne Robillard, said:

This agreement demonstrates the flexibility that characterizes a federation such as ours and allows us to conclude agreements that can adapt to the different situations, realities and needs of a province's population.

I want to quote from the minister from Quebec, Minister Pelletier:

This agreement, besides being of an asymmetrical nature, respects the exclusive skills of Quebec and the positions expressed in this matter. We have always believed that it was possible to agree on a formula that would recognize the work already carried out by Quebec and that would therefore allow us to benefit from [this] funding....

In a lot of ways, the province of Quebec has many things to teach the other provinces in Canada. Child care is an example, the \$7-a-day child care program, which advocates in all the other provinces look to as a very strong model and one that works in developing young children. It has always been a bit of a bizarre notion to me that we think children start to learn at the age of six when they go to school. Children start to learn at the age of zero or perhaps even before that, before they are even born. We need to do more, and this model in Quebec is one we can follow.

Another area where Quebec is a leader is post-secondary education. The province has chosen to invest in post-secondary education. If we look at the cost of going to school in Quebec, whether it is undergraduate or graduate school, we see the tuitions are low. There is a cost to that. We all recognize that, but that is an investment that has been made by the province of Quebec.

We have other provinces that have also taken that lead on post-secondary education. The province of Newfoundland and Labrador now has tuitions for first-year arts and science that are in the range of \$2,500, versus my province of Nova Scotia where it is more like \$6,500. That is another area where Quebec has shown leadership.

Business of Supply

Workforce training, maternity and paternity benefits, compassionate and sickness benefits for self-employed and new mothers are areas that are very important, and Quebec has been able to show its individuality. It has been able to invest in programs that it considers important, good investments. It certainly presents some budgetary challenges, but that is what being in government is about. That is the same rationale that this government has for making choices, except that it makes diametrically opposite choices, I would argue.

Quebec has had the opportunity, and Quebec has been respected and should be respected at the table whenever discussions of a federal nature are brought forward.

I want to reference one thing that has come up today, and that is the cuts that were made in federal transfers to the provinces in the 1990s. There is no question that there were cuts made to the provinces in the 1990s by the Liberal government, Jean Chr  tien and the finance minister, Paul Martin. The party opposite now says those cuts were too deep. It was not saying that at the time.

People acknowledged that we faced an unbearable debt burden in the early 1990s when the Liberal government took power. Changes had to be made and I recall, with almost some degree of humour, that the former minister of human resources and skills development, Monte Solberg, used to stand in this House and say, “This is the government that cut transfers”, until I pointed out to him some of his words from back in the 1990s, when the government was trying to deal with the deficit, when the government was trying to deal with the enormous burden of having a \$40-some billion deficit every year and a huge staggering debt.

This is the advice that Monte Solberg offered at the time:

We have a deficit of \$40 billion. We have a debt approaching \$535 billion. Soon international lenders are going to get fed up. They are going to say that they have had enough and want to find a place where their investment will be safe. ... I urge the government to come to grips with the seriousness of the situation, to take another look at its social program reform and to move ahead with serious cuts in the very near future for the sake of all Canadians.

That was the advice back then of members, some of whom are still in the government now, but specifically of one member who became the minister of human resources and skills development.

● (1345)

He said in October 1994, “...we gave the finance minister a list of \$20 billion in proposed cuts for the government to use in its efforts to get the deficit and debt under control”.

I offer that to the parliamentary secretary. He should have a look at it.

Later he said, “...we are going to have to cut a lot deeper into our social programs. It means we cannot hold out any hope for tax relief for Canadians for a long time”.

Of course, we balanced the books and invested in social programs.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Questions and comments.

It is 20 minutes. I apologize; I had a different indication. I am sorry for making the hon. member somewhat nervous.

Business of Supply

Mr. Michael Savage: Madam Speaker, it is not a problem. You never make me nervous. I am entirely comfortable with you in the chair.

My colleague from Cape Breton—Canso said you cut me short, as the provinces were cut by the current federal government. I think that is a good point. Wise wisdom, as they say, from Cape Breton.

Madam Speaker, that was a bit of history, but I want to talk about another area and I hope my colleagues will indulge me.

This motion today speaks to all the provinces and not just the province of Quebec. In Atlantic Canada, where I come from, we love to complain about lots of different things, but we know that the federal government has a very positive role to play in the development of Atlantic Canada.

One of the very positive things that has happened in Atlantic Canada over the years is the development of ACOA. As people know, in Quebec there is the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec. However, Atlantic Canada's I think was the first regional development agency, ACOA, in 1987. It was brought in by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and followed up by Liberal governments after that.

It made a big difference in Atlantic Canada, this understanding that there is a unique nature regionally. It may be specific to a region, but it is important to the overall building of a country like Canada, and ACOA was a very important step.

I recall back in the early 2000s, right on the cusp of this century, ACOA developed a program called the Atlantic innovation fund, which came about after the report "Catching Tomorrow's Wave". People like Senator Willie Moore from the other place and the current member for Charlottetown, who is going to be retiring soon to the misfortune of this House, were involved in coming forward with this plan.

This plan recognized that in Atlantic Canada there were specific projects that needed government help. We do not have a lot of venture capital. We do not have a lot of commercialization. The Atlantic innovation fund came forward and has been very successful in helping to build companies. It is not propping up companies that cannot make it on their own, but it allows them to take something to the next level.

In fact, a number of those companies are in my own riding. One specifically is an organization called the Acadian Seaplants Limited, which harvests sea plants. Years ago people thought that Mr. Louis Deveau, who has been one of the great entrepreneurs in Nova Scotia in the last half century, was crazy. He talked about bringing in seaweed and value-adding it here in Nova Scotia and sending it to places. He has developed a market and I think now has more than 500 employees in three or four different parts of Atlantic Canada.

Organizations like Acadian Seaplants Limited probably could not exist, certainly could not employ the number of people they have, without the support of the federal government.

Ocean Nutrition, which some people will know about, developed a process for micro-encapsulating omega-3 fatty acids for use in foods to provide healthier foods. It also employs Canadians and develops and spurs innovation in our universities, labs and private

enterprises. Those are the kinds of organizations that have benefited from the federal government.

So the federal government has a role to play, and we want to respect the jurisdiction of the federal government and the provinces on issues, for example, of poverty, housing, child care and post secondary education. We think there is a role, following the jurisdictional dictates of Canada, for the federal government to play in those things.

On poverty, for example, the Senate released a report just before Christmas called "In From the Margins", which is a call upon the federal government to be involved in the fight against poverty. Members of the Bloc are in support; for example the member for Chambly—Borduas has been a very strong supporter of that work. There are some issues around jurisdiction there, but we will work those out. This report will be tabled in the House of Commons sometime in the next couple of months. Since it is in draft form at this point in time, I will not read from it.

This government does have a way of using jurisdiction when it is to its advantage. The example I would use is the United Nations periodic review of 2009, which called upon the federal government to institute a national anti-poverty plan. The federal government chose to say it was not its jurisdiction. Yet if we look at some of the key pieces of social infrastructure, whether it is employment insurance, pensions and things like that, the federal government clearly does have a role to play.

There are six provinces and one territory, one of the provinces being Quebec, that have a national anti-poverty plan that they can be very proud of.

Child care we have talked about, but there is a need for a national housing strategy.

● (1350)

The member for Vancouver East has brought forward Bill C-304. We debated it again last night. I know the Bloc supports that. We are trying to find a way that we can ensure we can all support that bill and be respectful of the jurisdictions involved.

Another project that I know my colleague from Chambly—Borduas is very keen on is the Canada summer jobs program, paid for by the federal government, an initiative of the late 1990s of the Liberal government that puts to work 37,000 or 38,000 students every year. At a point in time when there are more than 100,000 fewer student jobs than in 2008, we could double that program, possibly even triple it. That would be a possible way to go, to make a difference.

Business of Supply

Employment insurance is a federal area, absolutely. We just had the grudging and, I would say, only partial extension of the pilot projects, like the best 14 weeks, like working while on claim, brought in by Lucienne Robillard back in 2004-2005. The government finally and grudgingly extended them, but has basically signalled the end of these, but if we look at the areas that are benefiting, we see this goes to help areas of high unemployment. It directs payments to people in areas of high unemployment. There are 21 areas, including Central Quebec, Chicoutimi, Jonquière, Gaspésie, Isle de la Madeleine, Lower St. Lawrence and North Shore, Northwestern Quebec and Trois-Rivières, so 6 of the 21 programs benefit specifically the province of Quebec.

I said earlier that this country was born out of compromise, not out of war, that the Fathers of Confederation chose ballots over bullets, and in doing so, laid the groundwork for a Canada that for many people is the envy of the world. Ours is not a perfect country; it is a work in progress, but our history is full of examples where Canadians came together and fashioned bonds of equality and common purpose. It is that desire to seek and work toward common purpose that I think enhances our sense of citizenship. I want a country that sees itself more than just as a collection of taxpayers.

Today we are hearing about tax points and transfers and debt and deficits. Those are not really the things that bind us together as a country. In some ways it prevents us from looking beyond ourselves. It creates division and prevents us from seeking the common purpose that allows us to tackle enormous challenges, like the demographic challenge facing Canada today.

Because of that I cannot vote for this motion today. I believe the provinces need to be respected. I believe their jurisdiction needs to be acknowledged. They need to be at the table, but the federal government needs to be at the table as well, a robust partner in building Canada and allowing us to work together to achieve the great potential of this country.

● (1355)

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate our colleague on a very excellent overview with respect to the strategic positioning of the budget and economic policies with respect to regional development, and then taking regional development and enhancing it to become the sum of the parts of this country.

I think that is an excellent theme, and I guess my question is related to that. He talked about ACOA and what it has done with respect to regional development in the Atlantic. He has talked about the Atlantic innovation fund. The government has said that because of the decline of the manufacturing sector and those events that are taking place with respect to the automotive industry in southern Ontario, it has created the regional equivalent to ACOA.

However, the budget does not strategically outline what investments will be made through that vehicle into the region. For example, there is very little with respect to the manufacturing industry and green industry, very little with respect to community commuter and rapid transit investments; but there is with respect to border transportation.

Could the member please just give us an overview of what he would do with respect to the regional development fund and

strategically how he would better place that with respect to this budget and the budget approach?

Mr. Michael Savage: Madam Speaker, my colleague is a diligent fighter for his area, and he is right. Quite often we get promises or raised expectations about what the government proposes to do, but the details are not there.

I think we make a stronger Canada by having stronger regions, investing in western Canada, investing in the automotive industries and aerospace in Montreal, investing in ACOA in Atlantic Canada, because we are more than the sum of our parts. Canada together, all of us invested, in some cases looking at the specific needs of a region, in some cases looking at national programs, is what makes Canada special.

It is both the diversity and the similarity of this nation working strongly together that makes Canada as strong as it is, and I think it is the best nation on earth. I am proud to be here. I just wish we had a better government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Questions and comments. Perhaps a very quick question before the top of the hour.

The hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I do not have a whole lot of time, but I would like to thank my colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for the bit of a history lesson he provided us with during the early part of his speech. He reminded the government that when cuts were being made in the mid-1990 it was the opposition then and it said those cuts did not go deep enough. Sometimes a little history lesson serves this chamber very well.

The member was saying he railed against the pension plan, as a matter of fact. He was elected twice railing against the pension plan and is now receiving benefits from that plan.

So I appreciate the comment made by the member.

● (1400)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I will ask the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour to make a brief response.

Mr. Michael Savage: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his factual and non-partisan question.

Let me just remind the House what Monte Solberg said in 1994:

We should abandon the infrastructure works program...and begin the overdue process of cutting government spending.

He then said we should:

come to grips with the seriousness of the situation...and to move ahead with serious cuts in the very near future

Then, two years ago, he said the cuts were too deep.

It is amazing how time and what side of the House one is on changes one's perspective on things.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour will have about six minutes of questions and comments after question period.

*Statements by Members***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS***[English]***HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Madam Speaker, before Parliament adjourned for the summer, my private member's bill, Bill C-268, was adopted by the Senate and given royal assent. This bill created a brand new offence of trafficking a minor and carried stiff penalties.

Today I am pleased to announce to this House that this new offence has been applied for the first time in Canada. This past week, a man from Milton, Ontario was charged with trafficking a minor. After kidnapping and gang-raping a young 17-year-old girl, the trafficker viciously forced her into prostitution.

I want to commend the police officers who worked hard to bring this case forward. I also want to thank members on all sides of this House who supported Bill C-268. The bipartisan efforts that led to the success of this legislation must not fade. Human trafficking is a heinous crime and it will take a unified effort here in Parliament to eliminate the modern-day slavery that now exists across our nation.

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ROTARY INTERNATIONAL

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the motto of Rotary International is "Service Above Self".

Rotary International's wide-ranging activities include community service projects that address many of today's most critical issues, such as children at risk, poverty, hunger, the environment, illiteracy and violence. Notably, Rotary International also promotes ethical behaviour.

One of the most widely quoted statements in business and professional ethics is the Rotary four-way test. The four-way test asks the following four questions. One, is it the truth? Two, is it fair to all concerned? Three, will it build goodwill and better friendships? Four, will it be beneficial to all concerned?

I propose that Parliament adopt the Rotary four-way test as a tribute to the men and women of Rotary International for their outstanding service and their ethical guidance in Canada and around the world.

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*[Translation]***STATUS OF WOMEN**

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Madam Speaker, October is Women's History Month and also Breast Cancer Awareness Month. There have been some hard-fought battles by many women in both of these areas.

There are a number of important events in women's history, including the creation of the Fédération nationale Saint-Jean-Baptiste in 1907, which was created out of the desire of francophone women to separate themselves from the existing anglophone feminist movement. This allowed feminist Quebecers to speak for themselves, since they belonged to their own nation.

Women must fight against a number of issues together, but they must also fight as individuals, as is the case with breast cancer. Research is essential if we want this disease to be history eventually.

Today, too many workers, refugees and aboriginal women still struggle with problems of discrimination and violence. We hope that one day, these devastating scourges, like breast cancer, will be things of the past.

* * *

*[English]***ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, less than a week ago the people of the Northwest Territories learned that their negotiators, after decades of trying, had reached an agreement in principle for the transfer of control and administration of crown lands and waters inside the Northwest Territories.

This event is significant as it is the furthest the people of the NWT have gotten to throwing off the colonial shackles that impede them from building a better north for themselves.

There is still much work to be done as this AIP is far from perfect. Mainly it is an agreement between only two parties. In order for devolution to work, an agreement must be reached that includes all of the aboriginal governments in the Northwest Territories, as well as the territorial government in Ottawa.

Perhaps if we could find a way to work together on this AIP, it will be the start of a new form of governance in Canada. This would make the NWT a truly unique part of Canada where public governments and aboriginal governments, through shared responsibility, work together for the benefit of all.

* * *

● (1405)

TIM HARRIMAN

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to tell Canadians about the passing of an inspiring young man by the name of Tim Harriman.

Tim died late last month at the age of 22, after yet another battle with cancer. Although his life was cut far too short, Tim accomplished a great deal and touched the lives of so many people with his courage and his generosity.

In 2007, this young man biked across Canada in what he called the Spokeman Tour to raise funds in support of children with cancer.

Tim battled cancer himself at four different times in his life. He knew first-hand the difficulties and pain involved in fighting this disease, yet he pushed himself to physical extremes in his quest to help others.

Statements by Members

Twelve hundred people from all across Canada travelled to Airdrie to pay their respects at Tim's funeral. I know I speak for the people of Airdrie when I offer my condolences to Tim's wife, Christa, and his entire family, and when I say that the memory of Tim Harriman will inspire our community for many years to come.

* * *

YOUNG HUMANITARIAN AWARD

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate an amazing 13-year-old Nova Scotian. Logan MacGillivray is the youngest person to ever receive the Canadian Red Cross Young Humanitarian Award.

Logan's many achievements include raising funds and organizing the shipment of two 12-metre containers to Sierra Leone, containers filled with school, recreation and building supplies to rebuild schools in northern Sierra Leone. He continues to raise funds to complete a children's centre that will serve 40 villages.

Logan's work and humanitarianism stand as an example that no one person is too small to make a difference, and he deserves to be recognized by the House.

* * *

CREDIT UNIONS

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Canada's credit union system. Member-owned and democratically controlled, credit unions take deposits and offer loans, but they also make very lasting contributions to our communities through financial literacy and by serving the underserved.

First formed in Lévis, Quebec, in 1901, credit unions continue to be a Canadian success story. Despite the economic downturn, they have maintained a strong financial position and are supportive partners of small businesses. Their commitment to service is evident in the 382 communities across Canada where the credit union is the sole financial institution.

Outside of Quebec and the territories, there are 406 credit unions and caisses populaires, with over 1,700 locations, serving more than five million members. Including Quebec's caisses populaires, one in three Canadians are credit union members.

To mark International Credit Union Day, I join all members in extending my congratulations to Canada's credit unions, their members and communities.

* * *

[Translation]

TRIBUTE GALA FOR FEMALE FARMERS IN VAL-JEAN

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all my Bloc Québécois colleagues, I would like to congratulate Monique Boileau, a farmer in Havelock, which is in the riding of Beauharnois—Salaberry, for having been named female agricultural entrepreneur of 2010 at the tribute gala organized by female farmers in Val-Jean. The winner has run an apple orchard for more than 40 years. She cultivates 30,000 dwarf and semi-dwarf apple trees, among other things.

I am proud to pay tribute to her for the role she has played as ambassador for her industry. Ms. Boileau's strength of character, courage and passion are an example to be followed. Her incredible entrepreneurial skills have been an inspiration to us all, and especially to women.

I would also like to take this opportunity to mention the work of Nathalie Maisonneuve, from Saint-Chrysostome, who produces medicinal herbs and organic berries. During this same tribute gala, Ms. Maisonneuve received the student in training award.

I applaud their determination and encourage them to follow their dreams.

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[English]

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism announced that our government is delivering on its commitment to crack down on human smugglers and those who seek to abuse Canada's immigration system. We are taking fair, reasonable and tough action to prevent the abuse of Canada's immigration system by human smugglers.

The legislation introduced today will send a clear message: while Canada will open its doors to those who work hard and play by the rules, we will crack down on those who seek to take advantage of our generosity and abuse our fair and welcoming immigration system. We will ensure that law enforcement officers have the tools they need to crack down on human smugglers, help ensure the safety and security of Canadian communities, and deter illegal immigrants from using human smugglers to come to Canada.

The measures introduced today will send a clear message to human smugglers who are planning to come to Canada: do not do it.

* * *

● (1410)

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP WEEK

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pride that I draw the attention of the House to Citizenship Week 2010, a celebration of our rights as well as an acknowledgement of our responsibilities. This week gives us an opportunity to reflect on and talk about both the practical and symbolic implications of living under the protection of the maple leaf.

Historically, the people who come to our country and become citizens are among the proudest Canadians. So, we must not celebrate only those who were born here, but also those who chose to call Canada home.

*Statements by Members**[English]*

However, issues around citizenship continue to offer challenges to the House. It was only in 2009 that many Canadian women gained equal rights with regard to the citizenship of their children and we still need to acknowledge our lost Canadians and work toward rectifying the failings in our current legislation.

This week should serve to remind us that being citizens of this dynamic and promising nation is indeed a great honour, but one that we must never take for granted.

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*[Translation]***IMMIGRATION**

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism announced that our government is delivering on its commitment to crack down on human smugglers who seek to abuse Canada's immigration system.

Our Conservative government will take fair and reasonable, but strict action to prevent the abuse of our immigration system.

The bill introduced today will send a clear message: Canada opens its doors to those who work hard and play by the rules, while cracking down on those who seek to take advantage of our generosity and abuse our fair and welcoming immigration system.

The measures introduced today send a clear message to individuals thinking about smuggling people and to those thinking about using human smugglers: do not do it.

* * *

*[English]***CREDIT UNIONS**

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we celebrate the accomplishments of the credit union movement in Canada.

[Translation]

Credit unions began in Germany in the 1850s. In North America, it was Alphonse Desjardins who, in 1901, on the corner of his kitchen table in Lévis, adopted this idea and created an alternative to the existing financial services. Seven years later, this new system had grown and had already spread to the United States. Today, one Canadian in three is a member-owner of their own local credit union. The popularity of credit unions is not waning.

In August of this year, Synovate handed out its 2010 awards for best banking services in Canada. The results were striking. In almost every category, from customer service to ATMs, from online service to telephone banking service, from financial planning to advice, credit unions were at the top.

[English]

We in this House who make policy would do well to note that according to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, most small businesses choose credit unions.

CANADIAN FORCES STATION ST. JOHN'S

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before getting to my statement, I would like to again congratulate all Canadians who responded in the aftermath of hurricane Igor.

Our government is supporting the Canadian Forces and the communities they live in.

Today the Prime Minister announced a \$118 million contract to improve the facilities for the Canadian military at Canadian Forces Station St. John's. The new facility will replace 16 buildings, some constructed 60 years ago, that are located across St. John's and will provide our Canadian Forces with improved space for maintenance, training and operations.

Construction will create approximately 630 direct employment opportunities over the course of the work. This is a win-win for the Canadian Forces and the city of St. John's.

Our government's Canada first defence strategy commits to updating and replacing national defence infrastructure to maintain a first-class modern military ready to take on the challenges asked of them.

* * *

*[Translation]***WOMEN IN POLITICS**

Mr. Claude Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as part of the festivities surrounding the World March of Women, including the large gathering in Rimouski, three women received the National Assembly medal for their exceptional commitment as members of Parliament.

I too would like to pay tribute to Monique Vézina, member of Parliament from 1984 to 1993, Suzanne Tremblay, member of Parliament from 1993 to 2004, and Solange Charest, member of the National Assembly from 1994 to 2007. They left their mark on the political landscape of Bas-Saint-Laurent and distinguished themselves on the national and federal levels. I mostly want to pay tribute to them for their important contribution to the advancement of women in politics.

I agree with what Irvin Pelletier, a member of the National Assembly, said and hope that the journey of these pioneers will inspire future generations of women to become involved in politics and bring us closer to the much desired gender parity.

* * *

● (1415)

*[English]***HINCKS-DELLCREST CENTRE**

Hon. Ken Dryden (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago I visited the Hincks-Dellcrest Centre in my riding. Among other things, the centre offers programs for children with suspected mental health problems and their parents. I sat around with some of the mothers and asked them why they were there.

Oral Questions

Most of them are new to Canada, their own mothers live far away, no family and no mentors around, and this is their first child. Those 10 new things that happen every day in a child's life, why? Is this normal? Is this a problem? What should they do? They learn from the staff and they learn from each other. They have made friends. Their children have made friends. They feel comfortable. They feel at home.

If anyone ever for a moment wonders why governments can matter, why taxes can matter, why cutting is not the answer to everything; if anybody ever for a moment wants to know why multiculturalism in some countries struggles and why this multi-culture of Canada works, go to Hincks-Dellcrest. It is inspiring.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow we will debate yet another coalition EI bill. Bill C-280 would provide a year's worth of employment insurance after only 45 days of work. This is offensive to hard-working Canadians.

In total, the Liberal-Bloc-NDP coalition EI plans would cost Canadians \$7 billion per year and would permanently increase EI premiums by a whopping 35%. In other words, the coalition EI plans would cost billions of dollars, result in massive permanent increases in premiums, kill jobs and harm our economic recovery.

Our Conservative government is the only party in the House that is standing up for hard-working Canadians and job-creating small businesses and voting against the bill. We will continue to fight against these costly and irresponsible coalition EI plans.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

POTASH INDUSTRY

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday when the Prime Minister was asked about the possible sale of Potash Corporation, he basically shrugged his shoulders and said "Australia, America, who cares?" He does not get it. This would be the largest resource takeover in Canadian history. It would have huge implications if Canada were to lose control of a key natural resource. It would have an impact on headquarters location, an impact on jobs and an impact on provincial revenue.

When will the government stand up and say no to this deal with Potash Corporation?

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the Prime Minister said yesterday was completely accurate.

The Minister of Industry will continue to follow all of his obligations under the Canada Investment Act. We will only approve any takeover that is in the best interest of Canada. That is something we take very seriously.

This country can depend on the Prime Minister standing up and doing the right thing.

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is precisely the problem. The problem is the record of the government on foreign takeovers. We just have to mention Nortel, Inco and Stelco. That is a record of indifference and incompetence.

The Conservative government stood by while Nortel sold off intellectual property. The government stood by while companies made undertakings to communities and workers and then walked away from them. Now we have the Potash story.

When will the government stand up and say no to the Potash deal?

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government will continue to do the right thing. In fact, we are the only government in living memory that had the courage of its convictions to stand up for Canada when it came to one foreign takeover and that was one more that we did not approve that the previous Liberal government did approve.

The Leader of the Opposition should know that during the 13 long years the Liberals were in power, they never once, not once ever, refused a foreign takeover.

We have a good record on this. We will continue to stand up for Canada and do the right thing.

● (1420)

[Translation]

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is precisely the government's record that we are talking about: Nortel, Inco, Stelco. The Conservative government has failed to carry out its duty. Now, we have the Potash Corporation story. The Prime Minister said he does not care whether it is American or Australian. He is wrong. Canadians believe it is very important to maintain control over our natural resources.

When will the Canadian government carry out its duty?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): As I said, Mr. Speaker, this government will only approve such takeovers where there is a net benefit to Canada.

I am pleased to talk about the Liberals' record on foreign takeovers. I think they had a foreign takeover of the Liberal Party just last year.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Kings—Hants.

*Oral Questions***GOVERNMENT SPENDING**

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just seven months ago, on March 4, the finance minister said he would “increase restraint on government spending”. Since then he remembered the increase but he forgot the restraint, because he has committed \$10 billion to U.S.-style prisons, \$16 billion to untendered stealth jets, and he blew \$1 billion on the G20 photo op. Today the Parliamentary Budget Officer called the government’s restraint plan “weak”.

Does the minister have any plan whatsoever to restrain his out of control borrowing and spending?

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the plan that all Canadians know about is Canada’s economic action plan. Let me share with all hon. members some of the results of that economic action plan that was put in place for two years. Since July 2009, 420,000 net new jobs have been created in this country.

That is what Canadians want to hear. They want a government that stands up for them, protects the jobs that they have and creates an environment so companies can rehire and create more jobs. That is what has put us ahead of the pack in the rest of the world.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 4 the minister also said that his deficit would be temporary. In fact, the borrow and spend finance minister has missed every deficit target that he has ever set. Two years ago the minister said there would not be a deficit and since then he has given Canadians the biggest deficit in Canadian history.

Does Canada not deserve better than a finance minister who cannot add and a Prime Minister who can only divide?

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always sad when we hear the opposition cheering on someone talking down the Canadian economy, an economy that is growing and an economy that is the envy of the world.

Aggressive debt repayment is what put Canada in the position it was in to be able to stand a short-term deficit. We have a plan in place to pay down that deficit, to balance the books and to go back to where we were, which is focused on paying down the debt and ensuring Canada stays in its leadership role.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is not just in the riding of Bourassa that businesses—at least seven of them—were awarded contracts from the government and returned the favour by contributing to the Conservative Party fund. In the riding of Mégantic—L’Érable, of the then Minister of Public Works, two Multivesco officials each gave \$1,000 and, a few months later, got a \$300 million contract from the federal government.

Will the Minister of Natural Resources admit that, with at least eight such cases proven, this clearly looks like a scheme?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, those allegations are quite ridiculous.

We need to be very clear. The first action this government took upon taking office was to finally eliminate the role and influence of big money in Canadian politics; no more union contributions, no more corporate contributions, and we significantly reduced the amount that individuals could contribute.

We reported to the House just yesterday that Bloc Québécois members of Parliament had been given campaign donations and then acted within five months in support of those same companies. We do find it interesting that they would continue to pursue this line of attack.

• (1425)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons should not try to change the channel: it is his government that awards contracts, and we have yet another proof of that.

There is a disturbing fact in this story. There was no call for tenders when Multivesco, a few months after making contributions in the riding of Mégantic—L’Érable, was awarded a \$300 million contract—again, this is not peanuts—for the construction of a federal building.

Will the Minister of Natural Resources and Quebec Conservative lieutenant admit that this is a system under which contracts are awarded and partisan contributions to the Conservative Party are expected?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us look at the facts. Is the member opposite actually suggesting that making a \$1,000 campaign contribution would see someone get a \$300 million contract with the government? That is absolutely outrageous.

This government has high ethical standards. We have no more of an ethical minister sitting in this government and no more better Canadian sitting in this government than the current Minister of Natural Resources.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the efforts made by Multivesco to get contracts are not limited to funding the Quebec Conservative lieutenant’s election fund. In 2006 and 2007, as soon as the federal government suggested it might put more public servants in Gatineau, the head of Multivesco gave \$3,000 to the member for Pontiac, who was then the political lieutenant for Quebec.

How can the Prime Minister condone such a system? Does one simply have to give money to the Conservatives to be awarded government contracts and rake in profits?

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has established some very strong rules with respect to the awarding of government contracts. We strengthened those in the Federal Accountability Act. Let us look at what the fairness monitor of just one of these contracts had to say, which is:

...decisions made objectively, free from personal favouritism and political influence, and encompasses the elements of openness, competitiveness, transparency and compliance.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are prepared to do anything to fill their party coffers. They pass the hat among government contractors, or they shamelessly accept contributions from those who are trying to get lucrative contracts. Over the past three weeks, the Bloc Québécois has uncovered about ten of those cases while taking a close look at just two cocktail fundraisers.

How many more cases are needed before the Prime Minister puts an end to this scheme?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have only looked into one riding association of the Bloc Québécois and discovered that a \$500 campaign contribution led to, five months later, the personal and political support for a government contract from the Minister of National Defence from the Bloc defence critic.

I have only looked at one Bloc riding association. Perhaps we had better look at a bit more.

* * *

[Translation]

POTASH INDUSTRY

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Prime Minister showed his immature approach when he claimed that a company that belongs to Canadians more than to anyone else was not a significant strategic issue.

Although the citizens of Saskatchewan are opposed, the Conservatives want to hand over the control of our potash industry to a foreign multinational.

Why will the government accept this foreign takeover rather than supporting the interests of Canadians?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have done no such thing. The Minister of Industry is currently reviewing the matter, as he is required to do so by law. He will only approve any takeover that is of net benefit to Canada.

The Prime Minister spoke yesterday in the House. I should remind the member that about 51% of the stock is held by foreigners and 38% of the stock is held by Americans.

However, we will always stand up and do the right thing for Canada, the right thing for Canadian jobs and the right thing for the

Canadian economy. We will always do the right thing for the great country that Canada is.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the largest percentage of stock, the majority of the board of directors and the resources themselves are Canadian.

It was laughable yesterday and again today to hear the Liberal Party members standing up and raising questions about foreign takeovers after they refused to say no to a single one after having dealt with over 11,000 of them during their tenure. It is almost as laughable as the government's approach because under its watch only one was turned down.

There is only a handful of staff looking after these reviews. In fact, it looks like there is maybe one person studying the deal for a few hours. The rest are carrying around the rubber stamp.

After three decades of ineptitude on foreign investment, when will we have a policy that defends—

• (1430)

The Speaker: The hon. government House leader.

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me say two things.

One, 51% of the stock is currently held by foreigners and 38% of the stock is currently held by Americans.

I do, however, agree with the leader of the NDP when it comes to his comments about the Liberal Party. Eleven thousand different foreign takeovers took place over 13 long years and how many did it not approve? Absolutely none.

This government will do that when it is required. I can tell my friends in the NDP that they can count on the Minister of Industry and hard-working public servants to do the right thing for this great country.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): We will see, Mr. Speaker, because not only is the government being reckless with our strategic resources with approvals that have already been given to other takeovers, as we have seen, but once it approves a sellout it allows the financing of the deal to be on the backs of the Canadian taxpayers to the tune of huge amounts of money.

The Conference Board says that the corporate giants are deducting the cost of the purchases from their tax bills and Canadians are having to pay for it.

The minister of rubber stamps is out there talking about net benefit, meanwhile, who the heck is benefiting? The taxpayer who is paying the bill, the Saskatchewan folks who are losing their resources or workers their jobs?

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me say once again that Canadians can count on this Prime Minister, this Minister of Industry and this government to always do the best thing for Canadians. The issue is currently being reviewed by the Minister of Industry. He has made no decision so it would be premature to come with speculations, which are somewhat wild that the leader of the NDP has made.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

PRIME MINISTER'S CABINET

Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, although there have been three separate investigations and one scandal, the Minister of Natural Resources continues to enjoy the protection of his Prime Minister. The former Minister of Tourism did not enjoy this protection when she was demoted for daring to support a gay festival. The former Minister for Status of Women was fired without any explanation.

The Prime Minister does not hesitate to kick women out of his cabinet, but tolerates the intolerable from his male ministers. Why?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, those allegations are just absolutely ridiculous.

This Prime Minister is the Prime Minister who appointed the largest number of women to a federal cabinet in Canadian history.

Whether it is the great contribution of the Minister of State for Seniors, whether it is the great contribution of the Minister of Labour, whether it is the great contribution of the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, this government has a lot of powerful, strong women who do a great job for Canadians each and every day and they always stand up for Canada.

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, despite three separate investigations, the Prime Minister continues to stand by his man at Natural Resources. It is a special protection that was not enjoyed by the former tourism minister. She got demoted for funding a gay pride festival. The former status of women minister got fired without getting a clear reason.

The Prime Minister always circles his wagons to protect his male cabinet ministers and always throws his female ministers to the wolves. Why?

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was the Liberal Party that smeared, maligned and said the most outrageous things about one of the members in question. Now, of course, it is the great defender.

We have many strong women who serve in this government. I neglected to mention the great contribution of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, the phenomenal work of the Minister of Health and, of course, the great Minister of International Cooperation who has done a fantastic job over the last two months.

* * *

CENSUS

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government operates under a cloak of secrecy.

Day in and day out, more backroom deals and more dark secrets are revealed, whether it is staff interfering with access to information or abolishing the long form census or secret winks and handshakes to obtain government contracts.

Why does the Conservative government not open up the doors and windows of democracy for all Canadians? When will the govern-

ment implement the Liberal plan to reinstate the long form census, offer full access to information and adopt a principle of open government?

• (1435)

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are always open and truthful to the Canadian public. With respect to the long form census, there has been a robust debate about that issue.

In fact, we have taken a fair and reasonable position, seeking to balance the user's inclination to want more and more data, and we want to ensure they get useful and usable data, but at the same time we want to balance that off with the fair and reasonable requests of some Canadians who do not want to see their government coercing them with threats of jail time or fines to reveal very personal information.

I think our positions are fair and reasonable.

[Translation]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we celebrated the first world statistics day.

However, Canadian statisticians spent the day in mourning. Recent months have been difficult for the best statistical agency in the world after losing its best source of information and its chief statistician.

It is all part of this government's hidden and obscure plan to misinform Canadians, to base policies on ideology, and to keep citizens in the dark.

How can the Prime Minister justify choosing ignorance and lack of transparency over openness and respect for facts?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, it is important to strike a balance between the need for information and the rights of Canadians so that the government does not use power against its citizens.

[English]

We have a fair and balanced position. We think it is reasonable and right to have that balanced position. I encourage the hon. member to be in agreement with the Liberal member for Richmond Hill who had that position four and a half years ago.

* * *

[Translation]

OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the National Assembly of Quebec has adopted a motion calling for a moratorium on oil and gas exploration in the Gulf of St. Lawrence until 2012 so that the environmental and safety risks can be assessed. The best way for Quebec to protect itself is to have an agreement on the St. Lawrence seabed.

Will the Minister of Natural Resources promise to enter into such an agreement this fall, which is what the Government of Quebec has been calling for?

Oral Questions

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is a bit behind the times. We have always promised to develop our natural resources in a responsible manner, in co-operation with the provinces. Now, Quebec has said it wants an agreement like the Canada—Newfoundland and Canada—Nova Scotia agreements.

Discussions are proceeding, as the minister has said repeatedly, and talks are under way.

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the safety of gas development in the St. Lawrence is uncertain. While Quebec has imposed a moratorium, Newfoundland is going full steam ahead.

Will the government admit that federalism is bad for Quebeckers, because if Quebec were a sovereign nation, it could take legal action in international court to require that Newfoundland comply with a moratorium so that the environmental risks associated with gas exploration could be assessed?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois, which has always been dismissive of fossil fuels, is suddenly interested in this form of energy.

Why the sudden interest in developing this form of energy? Because the Bloc members see the potential for divisiveness and want to pick a fight with Newfoundland, once again, to serve their own purposes, their own cause and their own ideology, which most Quebeckers do not want to hear about anymore.

I repeat, talks are under way with Quebec, and we are going to take a positive approach. If Quebec wants an agreement, we will negotiate in good faith.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of International Trade made some very disturbing comments about the negotiations with the European Union. He said he was not terribly concerned about Latvian culture threatening Canadian culture. How shameful.

The Government of Quebec has always maintained a clear stance on cultural exemption: culture is not merchandise.

Since the federal government is speaking on behalf of Quebec in the negotiations with the European Union, will it defend the interests of Quebec's cultural community and demand a cultural exemption?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our free trade negotiations with the European Union offer significant opportunities for all Canadians. Everyone understands that we are trying to obtain the same cultural exemption that we ask for in all our trade agreements. We are convinced that the 27 member states of the European Union will also be seeking their own cultural exemptions.

• (1440)

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to government contracts issued by Quebec and the municipalities, we need to demand the same rules and exemptions that govern all EU members.

Will the Minister of International Trade ensure that the same provisions that exist within the European Union also apply to the future free trade agreement between Canada and Europe?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the first time in Canadian history, the provinces and territories are at the negotiating table to conclude a free trade agreement with the European Union. They have the power to defend their access to government contracts. We are proud to be working with the provinces and territories towards a free trade agreement that will create jobs for all Canadians, including Quebeckers.

* * *

[English]

CANADIAN COUNCIL ON LEARNING

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government continues to choose ignorance over information. The changes to the long form census were the culmination of a series of ideological attacks on evidence gathering, like the decision to kill the Canadian Council on Learning. At a time when Canadians face demographic challenges that can only be solved by investing in education, the government cancelled the very agency that was producing the road map to a more educated Canada.

Why did the Conservative government abandon an organization that provides such critical information and leadership to Canadians?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Council on Learning was provided with one-time funding of \$85 million in 2004. It has always been clear that this funding would expire after five years. In fact, the funding was extended for one year.

We are committed to value for taxpayer dollars and understand the need for stronger learning and labour market information systems, and that is where the government is proceeding.

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, killing the CCL is just rotten economics. We need to know how Canada's education system is doing so we can prepare for the new economy.

At \$17 million, the CCL was a bargain. The government is going to spend an extra \$35 million to get less information on the long form census. More spending, less information, how does that work? The president of the CCL will keep working without a salary because he, like many others, understands the importance of the CCL.

Why does the government insist on entering the new information age with no information at all?

Oral Questions

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to having the most educated and the most skilled workforce. It is vital to our economic recovery and success. That is why we have taken unprecedented action through the Canada economic action plan. We have introduced new and improved grant programs. Students do not have to pay back as much. In fact, close to 280,000 students are benefiting from that. Last year, over 140,000 more benefited than under the old Liberal system.

We are looking at our education system in a positive way.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last spring, in the House, the Minister of National Defence said, “This next generation fighter, again, will be an open, competitive, transparent process—”.

But this week, an assistant deputy minister at National Defence said that there was never meant to be a competition, and that it was impossible to purchase fighter jets through a bidding process.

Who was telling the truth to Parliament?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me bring the member up to speed. There was a competition. In fact, Canada, under the former Liberal government, participated in an extensive, rigorous, U.S.-led competition between 1997 and 2001. There were two bidders at that time and Lockheed Martin won. It was in fact the Liberal government of the day that signed the joint strike fighter program in 2002, following an extensive competition for the F-35 Lightning.

Why do the members opposite, why does the Liberal Party, always want to take the force out of the air force?

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister's ADM made it very clear to me this week that the past government did not decide this in advance, that in fact the competition was not settled and we were not part of it.

The biggest borrowing government in Canadian history was warned about the huge financial gamble it was taking on the untendered \$16 billion fighter jet contract. Why has a government, which is adding \$170 billion to our national debt, not learned from its gross fiscal mismanagement? Why does it oppose a fair and open competition when it knows it can have one?

• (1445)

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): I repeat for the hon. member, Mr. Speaker, that there was a competition. In fact, he was a member of the government that held the competition, so he ought to know that.

What is really ironic despite the publication of a Canada first defence strategy back in May 2008, where it clearly outlines the intent to follow the path set in place by the Liberal government to

purchase 65 next generation fighter aircraft, the Liberals did not ask a single question on this until the spring of 2010.

Welcome on board. We will get new fighter aircraft because the Canadian Forces deserve the best protection in the best planes in the world.

* * *

SEALING INDUSTRY

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government continues to take principled stands internationally while defending the interests of Canadians. This includes the important issue of the seal hunt.

Could the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans inform the House on the latest developments at the European General Court on this important issue?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the European General Court confirmed that European markets would remain open to Canadian seal products pending further resolution of an Inuit-led court challenge.

Our government welcomes this news and will continue to stand with the Inuit and with all Canadian sealers to defend this legitimate industry against the misinformation campaign of radical animal rights groups and some Liberals.

This position may not always be popular, but it certainly is the right thing to do.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government just does not get it. Despite its talking points, Canada is no longer the leading OECD economy. Unemployment remains alarmingly high. Consumer confidence is taking a nose dive. The Bank of Canada itself is warning that things are worse than the finance minister claimed just last week in his economic update. The PBO now confirms that the government's obsession with tax cuts and austerity plans just will not work.

This is no time to declare mission accomplished. Will the government finally get serious about a middle-class recovery and start creating jobs?

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact, we are concerned about the jobs of Canadians. That is why we put in place Canada's economic action plan.

We have told the people in the House time and time again how it has actually worked. I would love to repeat the number, and that is 420,000 net new jobs.

Oral Questions

We have the lowest deficit in the G7. Our deficit for this year is actually lower than we had originally projected. Since July, as I say, there have been 420,000 new jobs, but the Liberals, in all of their blustering and raising taxes as they would, would kill 400,000 jobs.

[Translation]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, could he stop patting himself on the back and look at the facts? According to the figures that he himself provided today, it will take us at least five years to bring our unemployment rate down to a level as low as Germany's. The difference is that Germany has a vision for the future.

Instead of following its policy of blindly cutting taxes, which, by definition, helps only the most profitable businesses, why does the government not reinstate programs like the eco-energy program, which they cancelled out of the blue? Why not leave something constructive for future generations, instead of leaving the largest deficit in our history?

[English]

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is certainly a lot of mistakes in that question. It is not the largest deficit in history. In fact, the Liberals' deficit in the 1990s in real dollars, for those who understand real dollars, was three times what we are dealing with.

We have a plan to pay down that deficit. Nowhere in that plan do we even consider downloading that deficit on to the backs of the provinces like we saw the Liberals do when they offloaded \$25 billion on to the provinces. We will not do that.

* * *

[Translation]

QUEBEC BRIDGE

Mr. Pascal-Pierre Paillé (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, according to a Delcan study published last year, vital parts of the Quebec Bridge structure are rusting. The bridge is in such poor shape that it may very well need to be closed down completely for safety reasons.

What is the government waiting for to reclaim the Quebec Bridge from CN in order to repair it as quickly as possible?

• (1450)

[English]

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, CN is responsible for the bridges on which it runs. We continue to work with the provinces and with proponents on infrastructure projects right across Canada.

However, I think I understand the problem when it comes to infrastructure and the Bloc members. The problem is we are working with a program called building Canada and whenever we do that, they are always against it.

[Translation]

Mr. Pascal-Pierre Paillé (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister could have said that he is "neither for nor against" or "on the contrary" and it would have been more clear than what he just said to us. Nearly six months ago, a motion passed in the House

ordered the government to accept its responsibility. The Minister of Transport needs to reclaim the Quebec bridge and finish the work as quickly as possible. Then, at the end of it all, we will see who is going to pick up the tab: Transport Canada or CN.

What is the government waiting for to keep its promise to repair the Quebec Bridge?

[English]

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not our bridge, but we continue to work with CN. All railways and all bridges have to be safe. They are inspected regularly and repairs that are necessary to ensure they are maintained in a safe manner are always in place.

As far as the future of bridges is concerned, whether it is the bridges in and around Montreal, the highway bridges, other bridges throughout Quebec and across Canada, often they are part of plans on which we work together with the provinces to enhance the repairs and rehabilitation. However, these bridges are always safe and that is never in dispute.

* * *

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, can the government tell us how it can be in Canada's interests to lose a military base that is important not only to us as a country, but also to our NATO partners? How can it be in Canada's interest to lose access to the economic capital of the Arab world? Why does the government continue to confuse principles with government incompetence?

[English]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that the Minister of Foreign Affairs spoke with his counterpart in the United Arab Emirates and they both agreed that the broader Canadian-UAE relationship should not be put at risk due to recent events.

The Government of Canada does not comment on operational matters concerning the deployment of Canadian Forces abroad. The Government of Canada is fully capable of supporting its military commitments in Afghanistan.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the answer of the parliamentary secretary does not deal with the fundamental question. The government has stood on many occasions and talked about Canada's national interests.

As an opposition, we simply have to ask how it can possibly be in our national interest to lose access to a military base that has been important for our mission in Afghanistan, important to us and important to our allies in NATO. How can it possibly be in our national interest for us to have committed such a gaff in the negotiations that in fact we have lost ground with what is surely the economic hub of the Middle East? That is what the government has allowed to happen.

Oral Questions

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, the Government of Canada is fully capable of supporting its military commitment in Afghanistan. The Government of Canada always chooses arrangements that are in the best interest of Canada and the best value to Canadians. What the UAE was offering was not in the best interest of Canada.

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GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives keep saying that they cannot be bought for a measly \$500, so it begs this question. What is their price?

Nicola Papiccio gave \$1,500 to the Conservatives and his company got a \$36 million contract with the Minister of Public Works and Government Services. We now learn that Camille Villeneuve gave to the riding association of the former minister of public works. His company got a \$293 million untendered construction contract. It seems greasing the wheels of commerce is a time honoured Conservative tradition.

If \$500 is not enough, what does it cost to buy contracts from the Conservatives?

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government, when it comes to administrating the public's business, always acts with great, high ethical standards, openness, transparency and fairness. Those are all the principles. When it comes to standing up for Canada, this government has no price. We will always do what is right for this great country.

• (1455)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative riding association of Bourassa financed itself almost entirely off a single cocktail party financed by grateful contractors who dutifully coughed up a tithe to the Conservative Party, the maximum allowable tithe. The minister's own riding association finances itself from donors who get government contracts.

People should not have to wait for the RCMP to raid ministers' offices to find out the extent and the scope of this problem. Will the government finally just own up to the fact that its fundraising tactics are immoral and in fact corrupt?

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have high personal regard for this member, but these allegations he is making are quite outrageous. I would say to the member, if he has any facts he would like to put on the table, if he would like to repeat some of these allegations outside, I would welcome him to do that.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow we will debate yet another coalition EI bill. Our Conservative government is the only party in this House that is standing up for taxpayers and voting against this costly and irresponsible bill. Bill C-280 would provide a year's worth of

employment insurance after only 45 days of work. This is offensive to hard-working Canadians.

Can the parliamentary secretary inform the House of the consequences if the Liberal-Bloc-NDP coalition gets the chance to implement its EI plans?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, certainly I will. The Liberal-Bloc Québécois-NDP coalition EI plans would cost Canadians \$7 billion per year. It would permanently increase EI premiums by a whopping 35%. The coalition EI plan would cost billions of dollars, result in a massive permanent increase in EI premiums, kill jobs and harm our economic recovery.

Our Conservative government will continue to stand up for hard-working Canadians and job-creating small businesses and continue to fight against these costly and irresponsible bills.

* * *

CHILD AND SPOUSAL SUPPORT

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, according to the last census, over 80% of single-parent families in Canada are headed by females. We have all heard from our constituents. Thousands of single moms in Canada are facing delays in getting their court-ordered child and spousal support payments from the government. In the last four years, the Conservative government has been delinquent in paying over \$2.4 million, in over 6,400 cases. Single moms of Canada really do deserve better.

The government knew about this mess six months ago. Why has nothing been done to clean it up?

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question coming from the member opposite. There have been some areas where this has not moved along quickly enough and we have given very clear direction that we want this to proceed as quickly as possible.

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[Translation]

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Quebec is trying to reach an agreement with the federal government on the necessary additional costs involved in completing highway 175. The Minister of Veterans Affairs himself recognized that work of this scale could see some cost overruns. The Conservative government has even agreed to cover the first cost overrun.

Will the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities answer the call of the National Assembly and commit to covering half the total construction cost of highway 175?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we were quite clear yesterday. I read from the agreement that was signed between the Government of Quebec and the Government of Canada. It was a previous government but it was signed by the prime minister, to agree to a certain dollar figure on phase one. I can tell the hon. member that phase two would not have even happened if the hon. member down here, the member from Quebec, the regional development minister, had not gone to bat, because he gets no help from the members over there. He has to do it all himself.

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HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada's international reputation is taking another beating, all because the Conservatives have still not signed on to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Yesterday, in Japan, Canadian delegates to the Convention on Biological Diversity blocked the treaty to curb the rapid loss of plant and animal species throughout the world. Why? Because it had language recognized in the UN declaration.

Canada already agreed to this language in May after the Prime Minister had announced we would officially endorse the declaration. Why does Canada keep backtracking on the rights of indigenous peoples?

• (1500)

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada will take steps to endorse the UN declaration, which is an aspirational document, and we will do so in a manner fully consistent with Canada's Constitution and laws and in balance with the rights of all Canadians.

Our commitment to helping improve the lives of aboriginal peoples builds on the Prime Minister's historic apology to former students of Indian residential schools and the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, CBC's *The National* highlighted Canada's new brain gain: the fact that many scientists from Great Britain and other countries are coming to Canada to conduct their research because of the strong support of our government.

British neuroscientist Adrian Owen said:

Canada has decided to invest in science...and I am going to a place that is going to support the work that I do.

Would the minister update the House on our government's success in supporting research across the country?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his strong support for research in the first place. Of course he is correct. Canada is

becoming an international destination of choice for the world's top researchers. Last week, it was reported that our government will spend a historic \$11.7 billion on science and technology this year alone. We are doing this because science drives commerce. It creates jobs. It improves the quality of life for Canadians.

It is disappointing that the official opposition is doing all it can to drive jobs away with its F-35 stance and its raising of taxes stance. That is not good for the country. What we are doing is good for the country.

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TRANSPORTATION

Hon. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, Ind. Cons.): Mr. Speaker, a cost-competitive transportation sector is a key component of the travel and tourism industry, generating billions in tax revenues.

Canada's existing airline policies have resulted in a drop from 8th to 15th place among the world's most visited destinations. Our tourist deficit has risen dramatically from \$1 billion to \$14.5 billion, and 2.5 million Canadians are now going to U.S. airports in order to travel on less expensive airline tickets.

When will the government live up to its commitment to eliminate or cut airport rents and excise fuel taxes so Canada can become globally competitive and a more affordable destination?

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, things such as airport rents are important. After we took office, we reduced the rents for airports by half. They have been cut in half from what they were up to 2005. So there are some savings there.

Last night, I was speaking to the Senate committee. It is starting a study on the whole airline industry, as well. I have encouraged its members to look at not only things such as airport rents but also the governance structure of the airport authorities themselves and other issues. It is a pretty wide-open study, but I think right now we are in that mode where it is time to re-examine the policies for Canada. We want it to be very competitive.

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CHILD AND SPOUSAL SUPPORT

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the government admitting that when people become delinquent in paying court-ordered spousal payments they become deadbeats.

Health Canada and Veterans Affairs have admitted that almost 40% of their payments are delayed. This outlines a serious problem. National Defence has 3,600 cases delayed. This shows it is not an isolated problem.

The reality is that single moms, single fathers, and their children are suffering, their mortgage rates are going up, and their credit card bills are stacking up.

How can Canadians trust the government if, at the end of the day, it has not delivered and has become delinquent? It is betraying single parents.

Business of Supply

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before, we are concerned about reports that payments may have been delayed. The President of the Treasury Board has asked officials to look into this matter and we expect it to be resolved as quickly as possible.

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PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of His Excellency Blaz Kavcic, President of the National Council of the Republic of Slovenia.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

• (1505)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is Thursday and time for the question for the government House leader. Could he give Canadians a better understanding of what is forthcoming in terms of the House schedule this week and going into next week?

Could I also ask the House leader of the government to take a moment to explain to parliamentarians when we should anticipate dealing with the government's second budget implementation bill, which of course is followed through the ways and means motion? We have seen the bill and we are waiting for further notice in terms of when we can begin that very important debate.

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I did want to stand in my place and correct the record.

Earlier today, in answering a question, I neglected to mention the good work of the Minister of State for Western Economic Diversification as a woman serving in this cabinet. As well, the Leader of the Government in the Senate, the hon. Marjory LeBreton, makes a very powerful and substantial contribution to this government.

I am also pleased to report that the four House leaders are working well together. We have got off to a very good start.

Today is an opposition day for the Bloc Québécois and we will continue to debate on that for the rest of the day.

Tomorrow, we will resume debate on second reading of Bill C-46, the Canada-Panama free trade agreement; followed by Bill S-9, the tackling auto theft and property crime legislation.

On Monday and Tuesday we will begin with Bill S-9, on tackling auto theft and property crime; followed by Bill C-46, the Canada-Panama free trade agreement; report stage of Bill C-3, gender equity in Indian registration; Bill C-42, strengthening aviation security; Bill C-29, safeguarding Canadians' personal information; Bill C-30, on the Supreme Court of Canada decision in *R v. Shoker*; Bill C-41, strengthening military justice in the defence of Canada; and Bill S-2, protecting victims from sex offenders.

On Wednesday we will begin debate on Bill C-49, the preventing human smugglers from abusing Canada's immigration system act. If debate on Bill C-49 concludes, we will continue with the business that I outlined on Monday and Tuesday.

The House leader for the official opposition also requested to know about the second budget bill, for the fall. We have begun debate on that. We have already adopted the ways and means motion, but we certainly will be calling it again before the November Remembrance Day break week for constituents. That is obviously an important piece of legislation that we look forward to having the opportunity to debate in this place.

I also neglected to mention the hard work of another member of the priorities and planning committee, the hon. Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—FEDERAL SPENDING POWER

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: When this matter was last before the House the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour had the floor and there were six minutes remaining in the time allotted for questions and comments consequent upon his speech. I therefore call for questions and comments.

The hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the presentation we had the opportunity to listen to from my colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour touched on a number of very important points.

To be fair to the question, a number of programs have had varying degrees of success, but some have been very successful.

Back in 2002 there was a program established by the former Liberal government that enabled provinces to embark on partnerships to acquire health care equipment. Before the program was developed, there were about 15 MRI units in the whole of Canada. Through the development of this particular program, that number rose to around 150 MRI units. We all understand the importance of MRI units and the great benefit they bring to the citizens of this country.

There have been great programs like that, but I know there have been other instances that have not panned out as well. We had discussed earlier the millennium scholarship fund where allocations of money had gone to the province of Nova Scotia and were not really used in the manner that they thought.

With the proper checks and balances, I think it is much to the benefit of all Canadians to continue to maintain well thought-out and well-regulated programs. I think that would benefit all provinces and all citizens of this country.

I would like my colleague's comments on that particular issue.

Business of Supply

• (1510)

Mr. Michael Savage: Mr. Speaker, funds, such as the medical equipment fund, are very important. They reflect on the specific needs of certain areas. In a lot of places, they simply cannot afford that kind of equipment, so it makes sense to have it.

Shortly after that, the Liberal governments of Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin established the Public Health Agency of Canada, which came about sort of as a result of SARS and other issues because epidemics and problems like that do not have borders and are not jurisdictional issues. If the provinces and the feds can work together to determine what the needs are, solutions can be found that will benefit all people.

That is the kind of flexibility we need in our arrangements, federally and provincially, with everybody at the table with their own points of view being represented.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the agencies that has been so successful in our region is, of course, ACOA. ACOA has delivered some great programs for economic development that allowed people not only to maintain their communities, but they have also managed to be on the leading edge of many of the industries that allowed them to plug into commerce around the world.

Interestingly enough, there is also an agency that exists in Quebec, of similar fashion and similar form, that also has been a great contributor to the Quebec economy.

I wonder if the member could comment on that. This resolution would basically mean, in my opinion, the dismantling of these economic agencies.

Mr. Michael Savage: Mr. Speaker, my colleague was here when I spoke about the importance of ACOA. The beauty of ACOA was that it recognized that there were a couple of distinct gaps in Atlantic Canada. One was that the venture capital funding to support commercialization was not there to get products through the development stage and marketed. The Atlantic innovation fund was very successful in that.

On the other hand, a program that came to be known as SCIF, the strategic community infrastructure fund, was very important in ridings like Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor because it recognized that communities do not have the funding and cannot even match funding in some cases. They need more support. It is the role of the federal government to go in and assist in those areas.

The agency for the regions of Quebec had a similar kind of role in Quebec and I think it performs a vital service for this country.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on this opposition day. I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Terrebonne—Blainville.

To ensure that those who just tuned in via CPAC, our fellow citizens who have been so faithfully following our proceedings this session, who enjoy so much listening in, hearing us debate and go about our business day in and day out in this House, have a clear understanding of the subject matter of today's debate, I will read

again the very important motion introduced by my colleague, the hon. member for Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher. It states:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should, as long called for by the Bloc Québécois and now called for by the Member for Beauce, end the so-called federal spending power in the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces, eliminate the federal programs that violate the division of powers, and transfer tax points to the provinces by: a) eliminating all federal spending in the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces, unless express authorization is given by Quebec or the province; b) providing a systematic right to opt out with full financial compensation and without condition of all existing and future programs, whether co-funded or not, that intrude into jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces; c) transferring, at the request of Quebec or a province, fiscal room in the form of tax points and/or GST to replace the amounts that the province would otherwise have received under the Canada Health Transfer, federal programs in its areas of jurisdiction and the transfer for social programs and postsecondary education indexed to 1994-1995 levels.

In short, the federal spending that encroaches on provincial jurisdictions is in direct opposition to the division of powers in Canada. In principle, both orders of government in Canada are equal and equally sovereign in their respective areas. The division of jurisdictions is supposed to be watertight in order to prevent the majority nation, the Canadian nation, from imposing its views on the minority nation, the Quebec nation.

The division of powers that took place in 1867 between Ottawa and the provinces is quite simple if we look at it in the context of the 19th century. Matters that directly affected people and their way of organizing their society fell under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. This was the case for instance for the civil laws that codified the relationships between people and the organization of society through social programs, health, education, cultural matters, etc. If, however, an issue did not directly affect people or the internal organization of their society, it could be placed under federal jurisdiction. This is the case for monetary policy, international trade, and the overall regulation of trade and industry. In 1867, Quebec was not really industrialized and that aspect did not affect people very much.

Thus, Quebecers believed they had acquired the autonomy they needed to allow them to organize their own society without external interference. And it was on that basis that Quebec agreed to enter into the Canadian federation in 1867. However, the federal spending that encroaches upon areas of provincial jurisdiction calls into question this division of powers and Quebec's autonomy. In fact, this was the pact at the basis of the Canadian federation, which Canada is denying daily and has been denying for three generations by interfering freely with Quebec's areas of jurisdiction.

Benoît Pelletier, the former Quebec Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs under Jean Charest, said the following:

I...have a great deal of difficulty in reconciling the values underlying the Canadian federation with the idea of a federal spending power that is in no way subject to the division of powers.

• (1515)

It is for that reason that the Séguin report in its turn expressed the opinion that:

The "federal spending power" displays a singular logic in that the federal government intervenes every time in a field falling under provincial jurisdiction without having to adopt a constitutional amendment.

Business of Supply

In short, the federal spending power is the way English Canada unilaterally put an end to the pact in which Quebec agreed to be a part of Canada. Through the spending power, it managed to unilaterally change the distribution of powers to its benefit without having to go through the cumbersome process of constitutional amendment.

However, there is consensus in Quebec: federal spending power is not legitimate if it affects Quebec's own spending responsibilities.

Quebec has always felt that spending power is nothing more than a power to implement. This is why Quebec maintains that the federal spending power is limited to the areas in which the federal Parliament has legislative authority.

That is why, regardless of the party in power, Quebec has consistently maintained that Ottawa simply does not have this power to spend money in whatever area it chooses, and that any federal intervention in areas under Quebec's jurisdiction is in direct violation of the Constitution.

Federal government interference proves that the fiscal imbalance has not been resolved. The fiscal imbalance is due to the fact that Ottawa raises more in taxes than it needs to discharge its own responsibilities. As a result, Quebec no longer has the tax room it needs to fund its own activities independently. As long as Ottawa has the authority to spend in areas under provincial jurisdiction, the fiscal imbalance cannot be resolved. Conservative members who claim that the fiscal imbalance is resolved have not understood a thing. The fiscal imbalance cannot be resolved without putting an end to federal spending power in areas that encroach upon the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces.

The Séguin commission made the following statement:

The problem of the "federal spending power" is closely tied to fiscal imbalance, and its use is underpinned by the surplus funds that the federal government controls.

Quebec is not Ottawa's subcontractor. No, the fiscal imbalance has not been resolved and is, in fact, getting worse. More and more, as a result of the fiscal imbalance and its offshoot—spending power—the Quebec government is being relegated to the ranks of a federal government subcontractor. Through its interference and conditional transfers, Ottawa is imposing Canada's priorities and choices on Quebec. The situation has gotten so bad that Quebec's own-source revenues hit an all-time low in 2009-2010, when a quarter of Quebec's budget envelope was being controlled by the federal government.

Now more than ever, it is time for the federal government to hand over the GST to Quebec, as well as a portion of individual income tax, so that Quebec is no longer at the mercy of federal transfer payments and Ottawa's whims.

Where does the Quebec nation stand in all this? In 2006, the House of Commons finally recognized the Quebec nation. And recognizing a nation is more than just a symbolic gesture. Nations, like people, have fundamental rights, the most important being the right to control the social, economic and cultural development of its own society, in other words, the right to self-determination. One cannot, on one hand, recognize the Quebec nation and its right to make choices that are different from Canada's and, on the other, deny the nation the ability to assert that right by maintaining the federal

spending power. Denying Quebec the power to spend undermines its very existence as a nation.

● (1520)

The commitment made in the Speech from the Throne means absolutely nothing. The Conservative government's promise to limit federal spending power since the 2007 throne speech was just empty rhetoric. As a matter of fact, all we have been hearing since then is empty rhetoric.

● (1525)

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Health Act has five principles: universality, public funding, comprehensiveness, accessibility, and portability. The only way for the government to enforce the provisions of the Canada Health Act is to have the ability to withhold funding where those principles are not respected.

Without the Canada Health Act, a province like Quebec that would opt out would clearly have to expand into the realm of the private sector delivery of health care, which is more expensive and which would cater mostly to those who have the money to pay for those health care services.

Does the member not think that that kind of action would be irresponsible, since it would jeopardize the health and well-being of all of the citizens of Quebec?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, everywhere across Canada, private clinics are opening their doors. Just because the federal government is interfering in provincial jurisdiction does not mean that the private sector should take its place.

The federal government should take care of its own responsibilities, such as soldiers, veterans and Aboriginals. It is barely doing its job and it does so very poorly, as we can see. Rather than taking care of its own responsibilities, it tries to take on the responsibilities of others, but it is not very successful in doing so.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that the member has responded to the fundamental fact that to shift to a system which uses, and that finds it acceptable to use, private sector medical services means that professionals would be drawn out of the public system. It would jeopardize the health of the public health care system in Canada.

What would the member suggest be done when Quebecers travel to the rest of Canada? How would their health care costs be covered? They would not be covered under the publicly provided system in the other provinces.

What about people who travel to Quebec and get ill in Quebec and are forced to pay for additional health care services?

All of a sudden the inefficiency of that kind of configuration makes it totally unviable. I wonder if the member would care to respond specifically to those concerns, not only for Quebecers but for all Canadians.

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[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Mr. Speaker, Quebec has one of the best health care systems in the world, even though it has shortcomings and gaps, like a number of other systems.

I believe it would be possible to enter into agreements, as is the case in all areas. At present, we have agreements with other countries. If we are able to sign agreements with countries that are thousands of kilometres away from here, I do not see why we could not sign an agreement with Quebec, which is not even 10 kilometres away from Ontario. I do not see where the problem is. I think the hon. member is seeing problems where there are none.

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stop the Liberal member from asking the same question all the time, a question to which he always receives an adequate answer, I believe.

It is obvious that health care is Quebec's responsibility and Quebec can exercise its sovereignty in this area as it does in other areas under its jurisdiction. Is the fact that the federal government monopolizes this spending power not proof that it is trying more and more to reduce Quebec's sovereignty as a nation?

• (1530)

Ms. Nicole Demers: Mr. Speaker, when the Liberals were in power, they constantly did it. The Conservative government, at least the Conservative Prime Minister, is trying to make us believe that it wants to act differently. But his MPs told us this morning that they did not want to act differently, while the member for Beauce did the opposite. If the member for Beauce were Prime Minister, perhaps he would be prepared to limit the spending power. Who knows. We will see.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to thank my colleague for leaving me time to speak about this motion, and I want to congratulate her on her speech.

This extremely important motion has been introduced several times by the Bloc Québécois. Now, the member for Beauce, to our great surprise, has decided to defend this position; he is supporting it and is defending it. We hope that he will be able to explain to his colleagues in the Conservative Party, the governing party, Quebec's position on this issue. The Quebec National Assembly and the Bloc Québécois have been calling for this for a long time.

Over the years, Ottawa has been throwing money into areas outside of its jurisdiction. As my colleague explained, in 1867, at the time of Confederation, the provinces were given their own jurisdictions. That agreement has not been modified since. But what money has the federal government been spending in jurisdictions exclusive to the provinces? It has been spending the money that it has collected over the years from our taxes. It collected money that it is using to spend in provincial areas of jurisdiction.

In 2001, Quebec Premier Bernard Landry established the Séguin commission in order to try to understand what was happening and why the federal government was spending so much or interfering so much in Quebec's areas of jurisdiction. It was determined that there was a fiscal imbalance. There was so much money in Ottawa and the provinces needed so much money that, quite often, they were

tempted to accept interference from the federal government in their areas of jurisdiction.

The federal government spends money on three kinds of transfer payments. The first is conditional transfers, in which Ottawa gives money to Quebec and the provinces on condition that they respect federal priorities in their own areas of jurisdiction, which is disgraceful. Mr. Speaker, this is just as though I, as a member, tell you where to live, tell you what kind of house to have and that I will give you \$500 as long as you paint your walls a certain colour. I will give you \$500, but in return, you have to accept my decision, my ideas.

The federal government also spends money providing direct services to the population in areas that are in no way, in absolutely no way, part of federal jurisdiction.

Earlier, I listened to a Liberal member ask my colleague a question about health. Health is a provincial jurisdiction. Why would we agree to let the federal government put money into or transfer money into a provincial jurisdiction?

The third type of spending is related to corporate subsidies and cheques for people, once again, in fields that are outside federal jurisdiction.

It is obvious that when the federal has too much money and is trying to grab power beyond its limits, it spends. It has the federal spending power and it assumes more powers. This works against the provinces. We now know that this federal spending power has no constitutional basis.

• (1535)

There has always been a consensus on this in Quebec. Every government has consistently taken the position that the so-called federal power to spend in all areas simply does not exist. Federal intrusions into Quebec's jurisdictions are unconstitutional and were condemned by Jean Lesage, Jean-Jacques Bertrand, Robert Bourassa, René Lévesque, Lucien Bouchard and Benoît Pelletier, as my colleague said earlier. Benoît Pelletier was the intergovernmental affairs minister in the famous federalist government of Mr. Charest in Quebec.

In October 2007, the Bloc Québécois put forward a motion in the House of Commons asking that the bill the government was going to introduce on the federal spending power at least allow Quebec to opt out without condition. What does that mean? It means that since the federal government should not be spending in our jurisdictions but has money and insists on introducing Canada-wide programs, Quebec wants to opt out of these programs. Quebec wants to decide what sort of program to put in place for Quebecers. What Quebec wants is not to have to go with the federal program. But even though it wants to opt out, it wants to receive the money for the program.

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Take Quebec's child care system, for example. Quebec decided to set up this system, which is the envy of Canadian women and families. The federal government wants to introduce a Canada-wide child care system, but Quebec already has its own system. We are not saying that the government should not set up a Canada-wide system, but the system we have in Quebec is right for us. What we want is to be able to opt out of the federal system and have the money. If the government creates a Canada-wide child care system, it will give the money to all the provinces that use that system. At that point it should also give Quebec some money. Since we have our own child care system, we want to be able to have the money so that we can improve that system. But the federal government does not want to do that. It is intruding into Quebec's jurisdictions.

Every time the Bloc Québécois moved this motion it did it with Quebec's interests in mind, with the support of the Quebec National Assembly. This is what Quebec wants. The Conservatives are trying to argue against the Bloc Québécois and prove that we are wrong. Since they are masters at misleading the public, in December 2005, they promised to eliminate the fiscal imbalance between Ottawa and the provinces. In budget 2007, the government also indicated that it wanted to limit the so-called federal spending power. In budget 2008, it confirmed its plan to honour its commitment, but so far it still has not done anything. One Conservative member said the government must stop spending in areas of Quebec jurisdiction. That member, who is from Quebec, understands. Why is it that the other Conservative members do not understand? Will that member have enough power, clout and character to tell his government and his colleagues that they need to limit the federal spending power and let Quebec opt out of programs with full compensation?

• (1540)

[English]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Beauce is advocating for private health care. This would mean eliminating the federal government's health and social transfers, which constitute a \$40 billion transfer to provincial budgets, and removing the government's ability to enforce the Canada Health Act. That is a broad brush of the health impacts.

When we start talking about matters to do with separation, the problem is always how it could be done without having people fall through the cracks.

As an example, and I would like the member to comment, what do we do about first nations persons who live in Quebec, whose health care cost is entirely dealt with by the Government of Canada and not by the provinces? How would we provide health care to first nations?

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I appreciate it all the more as I am well aware of his altruistic nature. This gives me the opportunity to point out that this is not the first time we have heard a Conservative member endorse private health care. This government's ideology favours the private sector. Social issues are not its forte.

Quebec has always been able to provide services and care for all of its citizens, and particularly first nations. Federalist Canadian governments have failed in that regard. We were able to negotiate the

Paix des Braves. The people of Quebec are a nation. Quebec is therefore able to negotiate with other nations, including the Canadian nation and aboriginal nations. We are able to reach agreements for the benefit of all.

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on her speech. I would like to go back to a point she raised. She stated that the Conservative member for Beauce seems to agree with what we are saying about the spending power. However, in December 2006, the future prime minister said that he would respect jurisdictions. A little later, he said that he would ensure that the spending power is eliminated.

We may be acting precipitously by congratulating the member for Beauce. The Conservatives say things to mollify us and then they do the complete opposite. The member for Beauce comes from the Montreal Economic Institute, which does not tend to do things without a reason.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Mr. Speaker, that is a good comment. If my memory serves me well, the member for Beauce flirted somewhat with Quebec sovereignty. I think he worked in the office of a Quebec minister or MNA.

Without necessarily congratulating him, I think that he has finally understood that respect for a nation is important. Respect for a nation starts with respect for its economic independence. That is what the Bloc is pushing for and what the Quebec nation wants. It wants respect and to be allowed to decide what to do with its money and what authority it will exercise with that money.

• (1545)

[English]

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak to this misguided motion that the Bloc has put forward today.

I want to be clear. Our Conservative government has always supported an open federalism, and that will not change. We have maintained that stance since we were first elected and brought it to the House in 2006. We support an open federalism that respects provincial jurisdiction. But this federalism rests on a core of federal jurisdiction. It works with the provinces, not against them. Our approach has translated into some important pragmatic initiatives for Quebec that have kept Canada united, even more than it was in the past.

The Prime Minister, seconded by the leader of the government and the minister of democratic reform at the time, put a motion forward that this House almost unanimously agreed to. There were a few nays that came from members of the Liberal Party of the day. The vast majority supported this motion. I want to put on the record the support that this government has for Quebec. The motion says: "That this House recognize that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada".

That motion received tremendous support in the House, including support from our Quebec friends in the Bloc. Their support indicated that they also believe Quebec to be a nation of people, but within a united Canada. Canada has a responsibility to every province, and that includes Quebec.

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We have also given Quebec a seat at UNESCO, the first time any government has done that. That increases Quebec's voice as a nation within a nation, the voice of Québécois within a united Canada. It gives them a voice on the international stage, which they did not have in the past.

Let me be upfront. Our government has cut taxes for all Canadians, regardless of which province they live in, and that includes Canadians who live in Quebec. They are Canadians first.

I have been on two or three trips overseas with my Quebec colleagues in the Bloc. They were as proud as I was to show their Canadian passport to enter and leave those countries and get back to Canada.

I was on one trip across Canada with the finance committee. A committee member who is no longer on the committee but is still a member of the House, a Bloc member, was anxious to get his picture taken every place we went. He was so proud to be Canadian. Those members should be proud to be Canadian, as all of us in the House should be.

Perhaps most important, our Conservative government recognized that there was a fiscal imbalance in this country between the provinces and the federal government, and we fixed it. We fixed it in conjunction with the provinces. A formula was developed, a formula that had not been touched for many years. That formula was brought forward to all the provinces for them to sign. It was a new formula that better reflected the economic situation across the country. Quebec signed on. We fixed that fiscal imbalance. The previous Liberal government did not even acknowledge that a fiscal imbalance existed. We took action because we knew it was the right thing to do for Canada.

We have taken action to restore the fiscal balance by setting up transfers in a principled, transparent manner. This agreement greatly benefited all provinces, and transfers are now at historic levels.

I want to make sure people understand this. The transfers are \$54 billion. The government spends approximately \$250 billion a year, maybe slightly more, depending on what happens in a year. Of that, \$50 billion goes to pay the debt. That comes right off the top.

• (1550)

With \$200 billion left, a quarter of it automatically goes to the provinces, whether it is the health transfer, the social transfer or the equalization payment. There are actually three fundamental payments and a variety of others on top of that. Therefore, of the \$54 billion, about \$26 billion of that are in the health transfer that goes to the province.

A significant amount of money that we collect as a national government is redistributed to the provinces to help them service Canadians in a manner that we think they deserve based on the taxes they have to pay for that service. This represents a 30% increase from the previous government, showcasing our commitment to open federalism that works for all provinces, including Quebec.

Not only are those transfers at historic highs, but they continue to grow. Health transfers will grow at 6% and the social transfers at 3%. I knew I would be speaking today so I asked what it meant in real dollars that we have committed to the 6% over the next number of

years, up to, I believe, 2014. It would mean that what we are providing to the provinces, which includes Quebec which gets its 6% of that increase, would go to 26.9% and then, based on population, it will go to 28.5% and then to 30.3%. That translates to \$26.9 billion, \$28.5 billion and \$30.3 billion.

If the federal government were not involved in that 6% and there were a 2% increase based on inflation, the provinces would get \$25.9 billion, \$26.4 billion and \$27 billion, as much as \$3 billion less than what the provinces would be able to raise on their own based on straight inflation. Our commitment to the provinces for health care for the people of Canada is to provide a 6% increase every year and Quebec is benefiting from that increase.

We need to keep our commitments on these transfers. I was a city councillor in the city of Burlington during the 1990s when the federal government cut transfers to the provinces. What did the provinces do? They cut back on what they were funding municipalities. I can say that as a municipal councillor for 13 years in Burlington and the region of Halton, the cutbacks were felt every budget year.

This government is committed to continuing the transfers at the levels they are at. We have gone through a very tough recession and are moving out of it cautiously but we are moving forward as a country. We are seeing positive growth but we do not know whether that growth will continue at the robust pace it was. Economists are saying that it should slow down a bit. However, we are not going to penalize the provinces, including Quebec, by reducing our transfer payments to them at a time when they need the money to provide the services to all Canadians, including Quebecers, which happened in the past under the previous Liberal government. We are committing not to do this.

I want to provide a few quotes regarding our commitment not to touch transfers, which has been well received across this country. The Manitoba finance minister, Rosann Wowchuk, praised our government by saying:

The major part of our budget is that [they have] indicated that they are going to keep the level of payments to the province at the same level they committed earlier.

She went on to say that it was good news for them.

The Canadian Healthcare Association also welcomed our government's reassuring commitment to transfer payments. Its president and CEO stated:

To provide any kinds of services to Canadians we needed to know that there's some predictability to the funding coming across to the provinces and territories, so that's a major positive.

• (1555)

Finally, Quebec's own premier, Jean Charest, also praised our government for its commitment to protect equalization payments so that Quebecers could continue to rely on social services they pay into with their taxes saying, "Quebec is receiving more money in equalization transfers this year than they did in previous years".

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This shows that the provinces and territories continue to rely on the federal government, on our government, to practise open federalism that respects provincial jurisdiction and provides resources necessary their duties.

I want to point out that I have a list of about 15 private members' bills. I have six of them here that all ask the taxpayer of Canada to pay more to support programs. These six bills were brought forward by the Bloc.

Bill C-301, for example, which was improvements to the employment insurance system, would have cost billions and billions of dollars. Even the Parliamentary Budget Officer released a report indicating how many more billions it would cost. I have not heard the Bloc Québécois members on the finance committee, which I belong to, say that they do not want that money because it is federal money or that they do not want the government getting involved.

At prebudget meetings that we are having at this time every day of the week, we have people, including organizations from Quebec, coming to the committee and asking for more funding for whatever project they are here for today.

The student unions representing the students of Quebec were at the committee today asking for a national student's charter. A national student's legislation would help to ensure that the money transferred in the social services envelope would be earmarked for post-secondary education. They were not there asking us as the federal government to get out of their way and stay out of Quebec's business. They were asking for federal involvement.

Another bill asks for the removal of the waiting period and family leave costs. Another good one is one in which the Bloc is looking for a tax credit for new graduates working in designated regions.

We heard from witnesses today at the finance committee that the province of Quebec has such a tax credit and they said that 1,500 people have taken advantage of it. However, they were not there asking us to get out of their way. They were not asking us not to be involved. They were asking the federal government to support Bill C-228. They wanted us to be more involved in Quebec's jurisdiction as presented by the Bloc. They were asking for more money and more support.

I find it very ironic that the previous speakers talked about their right to opt out, that we should not be involved in their business and that it is provincial jurisdiction, but week after week they bring private members' bills to the House that ask for more money from the federal jurisdiction.

That is why I am not in favour of today's motion. Today's motion gives us an opportunity to at least chat about these things honestly.

I have been here four and a half years. When I was first elected, I found it somewhat strange that I would come to the House of Commons, our national government that is here for all Canadians, and see a party here that was looking to end that coalition that we have as provinces and as a country from coast to coast and that they wanted to separate.

● (1600)

Being from Ontario and not having been closely involved with federal politics, I did not understand. However, after I arrived here I got a new realization. I realized that Bloc members wanted their cake and to eat it too. They are not really here about separation. They are not here for what is best for Quebec because they are not able to deliver for Quebec. Their leader in the last election said that he was not interested in being prime minister. They are not here for the good of Canada and cannot point to one thing that they have delivered for their province.

The members of the Bloc are here and they are certainly entitled to their opinion. They are duly elected, and I respect that, but where I lose a little respect is on their principles. With the principle they are trying to portray in this motion, which is that the province should run its own business and the federal government should get out of it, then they should not be introducing bill after bill asking for more from the federal government. They also should not be at committee supporting other people's private members' bills that do not respect that principle. It makes it very difficult for me to understand what the purpose of the Bloc is here.

I will conclude with a few things and I will be frank. After 20 years in opposition, the Bloc members really have no results. If they can show me what results they have accomplished, I would be happy to hear about them. I would say that our Quebec members on our side in the government have done more in the four and a half years for Quebec than the Bloc has done in 20 years.

Our government will continue to deliver for all Canadians, including Quebec. We have fixed the fiscal imbalance by increasing transfers to provinces to historic levels. We have promised that we will not balance the books on the backs of the provinces like other previous governments have. We have delivered for Quebec with the increased transfer payments so that they can invest in their social system, and we did it all within five years while the Bloc has delivered nothing in 20 years.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this morning the member and I were at the finance committee meeting hearing from about 17 witnesses. We heard a lot of very similar issues about how important some of the federal initiatives were and how they would help hold the Federation together while we deal with the deficit. Many of the members' comments were about the fragility of a national government of the Canadian system and that a lot of investment has gone into it. There is a lot of important things, synergies and efficiencies in the system that probably would be lost if we start to chip away at those foundational blocks: the charter, the Constitution and some of the programs under agreement with the provinces.

I am sure the member has heard this several times already but I will read it into the record. It is a quotation in the *National Post* by the current Prime Minister dated January 24, 2001, in which he stated:

Alberta should also argue that each province should raise its own revenue for health care—i.e., replace Canada Health and Social Transfer cash with tax points as Quebec has argued for many years. Poorer provinces would continue to rely on Equalization to ensure they have adequate revenues.

Business of Supply

I wonder if the member agrees with the Prime Minister's view that we should support the Bloc motion today.

• (1605)

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister does not agree to support the Bloc motion today. The question does not make any sense because that is not the case.

I would remind the member of two things. He has been on the finance committee since we have been back, which has been about four weeks, and we have heard over and over again organizations from Quebec asking the federal government to be involved, to help them out and to provide assistance.

Under today's current fiscal economic problems and the fact that we are trying to get back to balanced budgets, we will not be able to help everybody who comes to see us. However, I have been on the finance committee for four years and every year we have 400 to 500 people asking us for more money. It is nothing new but we need to make some choices.

However, the facts are that we hear over and over again that they want to be part of Canada. They think Canada and the federal government should be helping not just them, but all provinces, and we will continue to do that. That is why we will not be supporting the motion before us today.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in view of the member for Burlington's statement that the Conservative members from Quebec have done more than the Bloc has done in 20 years, I would like to know what exactly have they done.

For 20 years, the Bloc Québécois has been an example of the democratic expression of a people. That means something because, as we have known for some time, the Conservatives have not embraced the principle of democracy in the House.

When he says that Conservative members from Quebec have supposedly accomplished more than the Bloc Québécois ever will, is he referring to the political contributions collected by Quebec members, including the Minister of Natural Resources, for the Conservative Party.

[English]

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, I respect the voters of Quebec and all of Canada for making the choices they have.

I am honoured to be a Canadian. I am proud that Canadians can go to the polls and vote for who they wish to represent them, whether it is municipally, provincially or federally, without fear or repercussion. I respect the voters of Quebec for choosing Bloc Québécois members.

However, this is a little lesson on government. Those in government bring forward legislation that becomes law, which can and will change the fabric of the country. Our Quebec colleagues on the government side have had input to every piece of legislation that goes before the House, as cabinet ministers and as members of the backbench, and on where we should go as a country. We look for their input. They have made a tremendous difference in the quality of life that Canadians are experiencing today which they would not have experienced under the Bloc Québécois.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague from the Bloc that I was elected in my riding to replace someone from his party. I sincerely think the people in my riding elected me entirely democratically. I would also like to remind him that Quebecers refused sovereignty, not once, but twice, with the Parti Québécois, whom the Bloc represents here. He has no lesson to teach me about democracy.

That being said, I have a question for my colleague. A lot has been said about health today. I would like him to explain what our government has decided to do with regard to health transfers to Quebec.

[English]

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, I do like numbers. That is why I am on the finance committee.

There has been an increase. Quebec will receive an increase in support of major federal transfers in 2010-11 totalling \$17.2 billion, an increase of \$5.2 billion or 44% more than it received under the Liberal government, and \$6.1 billion through the Canadian health transfer increase of \$1 billion.

We understand that all provinces, including Quebec, need support to provide the health care that Canadians expect and deserve. We as a government will continue to provide that support today and tomorrow for the proper health of all Canadians, including our Quebecers.

• (1610)

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cardin: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, in Quebec, expressed himself by asking his colleague from Burlington a question. He talked about democracy and referred to the referendums. He may be right about 1980, but 1995 was another kettle of fish. Was that really democracy? We know very well that the whole thing was rigged by the federal government. I wonder where he was at the time.

I nonetheless have a question for the hon. member for Burlington. He referred to what the government has given us by adopting the motion on the nation of Quebec within a united Canada. It is in this "united Canada" that we still see the federal spending power lurking about. The federal government wants to control everything, including the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces.

That is what is going on now, and that is what the Conservatives want to continue to do, even though in December 2005 they said they would respect the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces. If they respected the jurisdictions, then they would send transfer payments for programs.

Business of Supply

[English]

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and the government are willing to, have and continue to work with every premier and province across the country. Today the Prime Minister is talking about an announcement with the premier of Newfoundland. I quoted earlier the premier of Quebec who congratulated us on the work we were doing.

We are willing to work with every province and premier to make our country a better place for all Canadians to live.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas, Human Rights; the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer, G8 and G20 Summits.

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if I may, I will first announce the good news, both for my colleagues in this House and for all those watching on CPAC, that I will be splitting my time with the member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, because everyone is familiar with his legendary eloquence.

I would first like to congratulate my colleague from Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher who provided the impetus for this motion on opposition day today. I would say that he is the godfather of the motion, but I know we must use sponsor instead of that term in this House, as I recall being dressed down for that in the past. He does excellent work, and so we try to measure up to his standard, to provide the key points that will mean that this motion, on this opposition day, will pass virtually unanimously. The only ones who will perhaps oppose it are the Conservative members from Quebec, because it is very difficult to make them see sense.

First, let us step back and take a brief look at how the division of powers between Ottawa and the provinces stood in 1867. It was quite simple. Let us put ourselves in the context of the 19th century. At that time, it was easy, because if something directly affected people and how they organized society, it was under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. Examples are civil laws that codified the relationships between people, the organization of society through social programs, health and education, and cultural matters. If something did not directly affect people or the internal organization of society, it could be federalized. Examples are monetary policy, international trade and the general regulation of trade and commerce and industry. In 1867, Quebec was not really industrialized, and that was not something that necessarily affected people.

The people in our ridings, a majority in Quebec, feel that the federal government is remote from their daily lives. In fact, what I have just read is a direct result of that, and people feel very remote from the federal government. What affects them on a daily basis are matters that fall squarely within the jurisdiction of Quebec. But the situation is not the same in the other provinces, because in the other provinces, the government they primarily look to is the federal government.

How can we get the other provinces to understand our strong desire to manage our own areas of jurisdiction as we see fit? We know that there are different ways of doing things that are often extremely effective and efficient.

At one point, I went on a cross-Canada tour. The tour touched indirectly on Canada's social policies. It would be too long a story to recount, and that is why I chose the term "indirectly". At the time, the federal government wanted to take control of many of these social policies. In all the Canadian cities I visited, Quebec was always looked to as a model.

Indeed, the motion that gave Quebec the status of nation, which passed in this House, was a step in the right direction. But the words "in a united Canada" were added. Did this mean that "Canada had Quebec in shackles"? Were we supposed to think that the term "a united Canada" was a straitjacket in which Quebec was to be bound?

I think so, and we can see this reflected in the positions of successive governments that have tried to limit Quebec's initiatives and usurp areas of jurisdiction in order to create a Canada in the image of what we still see occurring today: nation building.

● (1615)

In the past, people talked about the federal government's spending power in public every day, and about the taxes collected by the federal government, which were too high considering its areas of jurisdiction. Technically, that is where it stopped. However, Quebec's financial resources were limited because the money was not divided up fairly, especially after Brian Mulroney's Conservative government swept through, leaving a deficit of some \$40 billion when it was voted out in 1993. We know what happened after that: after the 1993 election, there were only two Conservatives left in all of Canada.

With an impending Conservative government deficit of almost \$54 billion, using the rule of three, there should be only one single Conservative left in office after the next election. People remember, and they can make the same choices again. I do not think that we can expect to see the most generous members of that gang left standing.

I am now going to reread the motion because it says it all. Even the Conservatives should find it easy to understand. They must uphold the principle that they themselves adopted in this House: that Quebec is a nation. The motion reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should, as long called for by the Bloc Québécois and now called for by the Member for Beauce, end the so-called federal spending power in the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces, eliminate the federal programs that violate the division of powers, and transfer tax points to the provinces by: a) eliminating all federal spending in the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces, unless express authorization is given by Quebec or the province; b) providing a systematic right to opt out with full financial compensation and without condition of all existing and future programs, whether co-funded or not, that intrude into jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces; c) transferring, at the request of Quebec or a province, fiscal room in the form of tax points and/or GST to replace the amounts that the province would otherwise have received under the Canada Health Transfer, federal programs in its areas of jurisdiction and the transfer for social programs and postsecondary education indexed to 1994-1995 levels.

We are even giving the Conservatives the recipe, as we in the Bloc often do, but they will not listen to anything. They would rather stick to their own recipe and botch it.

Why 1994-95 levels? Because, when the Conservatives left office with a large deficit, the Liberals took office and drastically cut social programs, something that falls under Quebec's jurisdiction.

Business of Supply

Why ask for tax points and GST transfers? To have an insurance policy against individuals who run up huge deficits, and then pull the plug. All nations need some stability. We send money to the federal government. Every employer and organization in Quebec could be asked to send their payroll deductions, the tax money, to the Quebec government instead, which would then send the federal government a cheque for those areas that fall within its jurisdiction. But the government has fallen so low and is doing such a poor job that the amount of that cheque would not be very high.

• (1620)

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois boasts that it is the only party that defends the interests of Quebec, but in actual fact, that is total nonsense in view of its separatist option. The Bloc takes Quebecers for fools. The proof is that in the last election in my riding, people decided that after 16 years they had had enough. The difference is already apparent.

The only party that has really responded to Quebecers is the one led by my boss, Mr. Stephen Harper.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, order. Members may not use the names of other parliamentarians while speaking.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to restoring the fiscal balance and limiting the federal spending power, our government is the one that acted. In contrast to our Liberal colleagues, we did not cut expenditures. We increased the transfer payments.

The question is the following: how can the Bloc deny these realities and the gains our party has made for Quebec, when the Bloc itself supported the historic recognition of the Quebec nation initiated by our party?

• (1625)

Mr. Serge Cardin: Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague is really far too generous to his own party. Politics can be full of surprises, and as it so happens, the member just gave us a fine example of that.

The Bloc Québécois has been here for 20 years and will continue to be as long as Quebec is not a sovereign, independent country. That will happen quite soon—as soon as possible, I hope.

My colleague claimed that his government had solved the fiscal imbalance and controlled the spending power. They controlled it so well that Quebec households have no spending power left. Our companies have little spending power and little ability to invest because the government interferes in areas that do not fall within its jurisdiction and spends enormous amounts of money. As a result, Quebec is unable to take its fate into its own hands.

[English]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to try again with the member about the implications to providing health to Quebecers.

The member will know that with regard to the five pillars of the Canada Health Act those things can only be sustained if the

Government of Canada has the tool of funding to make sure that they are enforced, to make sure that health care is universal, comprehensive, accessible, affordable and publicly funded.

The problem we are dealing with is if we did not have that system there would be this migration to private health care which would be available to those who could afford it, those who had the ability to pay for that health care, which means that they could skip the queue. To the extent that there was a growth of private health care, the health expertise would be drawn away from the public system, therefore, weakening the public system and providing care only to those who had the ability to pay.

I wonder if the member really understands that this would potentially be the consequences of doing what is proposed in the motion. It would weaken not only the health system in the rest of Canada, but also it would jeopardize the health of poor Quebecers.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cardin: Mr. Speaker, on what basis can the hon. member presume bad faith on the part of Quebec? We are committed to health care. There is a debate all over Canada about the private sector and the public sector. Most people in Quebec go to the public sector.

Why would Quebec be unable to comply with the five principles? Someone spoke a little while ago about a person from another province who came to Quebec and needed care. If we took control of the health care system and the transfer payments for health became a transfer of tax points or GST points, why could administrative arrangements not be made so that it is possible to share services of this kind and not pay for them before they are provided?

I am disappointed that the hon. member presumes bad faith on the part of Quebec when the opposite is actually the case. Whenever Quebec votes for something or agrees with something in the House, it is for the good of Quebec. When it is for the good of Quebec, it is almost always for the good of Canadians as well.

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the motion introduced by the Bloc Québécois today, which was read so brilliantly by my colleague from Sherbrooke. This motion was drafted by our colleague from Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher and by our House leader, the member for Joliette. It is clear. I will come back to it, but first, I would like to give a bit of an overview.

I have already spoken about how there are the young parties in the House, including the Bloc Québécois—which turned 20 this year—and the NDP—which is still quite young, but older than the Bloc Québécois. And then there are the older parties, which have been around since Confederation—the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party. They are getting up there in years, and they have not evolved at all. That is the sad reality.

Business of Supply

But Canada, Quebec and the provinces have evolved, and new situations have developed. To give you a better idea, I will read out the figures I just received for the Canadian provinces, because we are lucky enough to have the Internet, even here in the House. In 2010, the population estimates by province were the following: Newfoundland and Labrador: about 509,000; Prince Edward Island: around 142,000; Nova Scotia: 932,000; New Brunswick: 749,000; Quebec: 7,828,000; Ontario: 13,064,000; Manitoba: 1,219,000; Saskatchewan: 1,095,000; Alberta: 3,720,000; British Columbia: 4,531,000; Yukon: 34,000; Northwest Territories: 42,000; and Nunavut: 33,000.

Six Canadian provinces have populations smaller than the former City of Montreal, before amalgamation. That does not include the three territories, which have veto rights in the Canadian federation. I am not saying that they do not deserve them. They also have the right to be heard. Furthermore, they will probably ask to be given provincial status, and the rest of Canada will probably give it to them, especially since Quebec has not ratified the repatriation of the Constitution. So this is a possibility. The Canadian federation is an association of provinces that do not have the same capacities per capita. But there are territories that go with these people. New Brunswick, which has 749,000 people, is a rather vast province that has needs, as we have seen.

Quebec, through Hydro-Québec, wanted to buy their hydroelectricity service. It was practically a national crisis even though it was a small expense for Hydro-Québec. It was a big deal in the Maritimes. The Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador felt it was the end of the Canadian Constitution. The transaction did not go through but, still, the province of Quebec must evolve with its own values, which often differ from those defended by the rest of Canada.

Often, the resolutions unanimously adopted in Quebec's National Assembly are not supported by members of the Conservative, Liberal or NDP parties from Quebec because their visions differ from those of Quebec. But this is 2010. As I explained, six provinces and the three territories have fewer inhabitants than the former City of Montreal, and four provinces and the three territories have fewer inhabitants than the City of Laval. I understand that these people need help from the federal government in order to create health systems simply because of the size of their provinces. The problem is that health is under provincial jurisdiction. This is no longer the federation envisioned by the founding fathers.

The federal government has played that game. It decided to invest because it wanted equality in the services provided.

• (1630)

Often, the services were developed by Quebec. That is the reality. The best example is Hydro-Québec, which was developed without any funding from the federal government but with fees paid by Quebeckers who pay their electricity bills every month and work very hard to do so. That is the reality. Hydro-Québec developed a grid that is among the most powerful in the world, which means that tomorrow morning it could buy neighbouring companies with pocket change. That is the reality.

Once again, we are imprisoned in a federation that does not want Quebec to grow too big, that does not want Quebec to develop equality and justice for its citizens. A daycare system was created in

Quebec and it is being tried in other provinces. All of the equality services that were created by the Government of Quebec have been, for the most part, emulated by the other Canadian provinces. However, that has often been done with a cheque issued by Ottawa, without Quebec receiving any compensation for the money it has invested.

As we know, health and child care are matters of provincial jurisdiction. Yet the Liberals are trying to create Canada-wide programs paid for by the federal government, even though Quebec has already developed its own network and invested its own money. Quebec wants either tax points or financial compensation. This has not happened. There have been a few piecemeal agreements regarding labour legislation and assistance for workers, but as for the rest, Canada-wide centralizing systems have been created to the detriment of Quebec. Year after year, decade after decade, we have had quite enough. That is the reality. Quebeckers are becoming increasingly fed up.

I will not read all of the texts, because I know my colleagues have had the opportunity to do so today. Whether we are talking about Jean Lesage, René Lévesque, Robert Bourassa, Lucien Bouchard or Benoît Pelletier, all Quebec leaders—whether federalist or sovereignist—have asked the federal government to give up its spending power in provincial jurisdictions. The federal government needs to withdraw and give us the money, in the form of either tax points or financial compensation, so we may look after our own affairs.

The Canadian Constitution grants us these rights, although the federal government—Conservative and Liberal alike—prefers to fall back on the Supreme Court, which allows the federal spending power. Quebec has gone beyond that. For decades now, we have not wanted the federal government to take care of our affairs because we are perfectly capable of taking care of them ourselves. The only thing we want is to stop paying 53% of our taxes to Ottawa. That is the reality. The federal corporate tax rate is higher than Quebec's. Some 53% of our tax money goes to Ottawa. We do not get that money back. That is the reality.

All Quebeckers are asking for is that when we create our own service, the federal government must withdraw and give us the money in the form of either tax points or the right to opt out with full compensation. That is what the Bloc Québécois motion calls for. The motion is straightforward.

Business of Supply

The hon. member for Beauce has decided to get on board the ship that the Bloc Québécois has been sailing since it arrived in the House in 1993. Good for him. The fact remains that the Canadian federation cannot go on like this. We cannot have a Conservative Party that ignores the issues and that, during an election campaign, promises not to interfere in provincial jurisdiction with its federal spending power, then does exactly the opposite when it gets into power because it is politically expedient. Once again, the Liberals are proposing Canada-wide programs. I understand that. There are six provinces with fewer inhabitants than the old city of Montreal, and four, plus the three territories, with fewer than the city of Laval. I understand that the Liberals want to help them, but this must not be done at the expense of Quebecers, who have paid for their own services, such as Hydro-Québec. The federal government even wants to pay for Newfoundland's underwater transmission line so that it can sell electricity to foreign buyers when Quebec paid for the same thing out of its own pocket. This House has to move into the 21st century. The old parties have to stop living as if they were in 1867.

• (1635)

[English]

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague on the issue of health care.

Quebec has innovated in a number of areas in primary health care. It has been allowed to do that over the years, which is fantastic.

Seventeen of the top 20 health care systems in the world are European, and all of them use different models to fund hospitals. They do not use block funding but rather fund hospitals based on patient care and services rendered. They also use a mix of public-private partnerships, and they utilize innovative tools in terms of prevention, using Head Start early learning programs.

Given the wall that we are careening toward with an aging population and a cost that is going up 8% per year and revenue at 3%, does my colleague not think that Europe is a place to look to in terms of innovations to save our public health care system?

• (1640)

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Laframboise: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Liberal member for his question, but he is making the same mistake as every Liberal, past and present. Health is under provincial jurisdiction. Each of the provinces must decide what their health care system means to them. Are we at a crossroads? I think we are, but Quebec will decide what kind of health network it wants to have.

The problem is that there are more than 10,000 civil servants in Ottawa, not one of whom runs a hospital or a CLSC, or provides services to the public. Not one. They just work on programs and statistics. It is time to end federal spending in health and give each of the provinces what they need to develop their own network, as the Constitution of Canada requires.

If my Liberal colleague intends to amend the Constitution in order to centralize health care in Ottawa, let him say so and base his next election campaign on that. The Liberals would like to but they do not dare put it in their election platform. They want to centralize health care in Ottawa. All they have to do is put it in their platform and tell

the provinces that, in future, they, not the provinces, will look after it. That is a political choice they would not dare make. They have never had the courage to make it.

Mr. Gérard Asselin (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, during the Bloc opposition day, we are talking about limiting the federal government's spending power in areas under provincial jurisdiction, and in particular health.

It is somewhat bizarre to see the federal government trying to perform in an area that is not under its jurisdiction. In areas under its own jurisdiction and where it should be performing, we have transport. The federal government should be maintaining its airports and its ports. It is even trying to assign the management of airports in the regions of Quebec to the RCMs and municipalities. Even small ports, particularly the ones that belong to Fisheries and Oceans Canada, are being left to port corporations on their own, with no money and no funding. When it does not work, they form a committee or commission a study.

There is also a federal program on privatization of small craft harbours. While the Liberals were raking in surpluses of \$10 to \$12 billion a year, port infrastructures were not being maintained and were deteriorating. Today, the federal government would like to divest itself of them, but nobody wants them.

I would like my colleague, who was the transport critic until very recently, to explain this to us. Once again, they should be looking after their own business instead of looking after other people's.

Mr. Mario Laframboise: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Manicouagan, who has to live with this situation.

The lower north shore and the north shore include much of the St. Lawrence and part of its estuary. In the early days of Confederation, it was already the most important engine of economic development in Canada. At that time, the federal government wanted the ports because this was the engine of economic development. But as the years passed, it became less glamorous. It was less profitable in political terms because commercial traffic was no longer necessarily by water, and was rather by land or air.

Health networks grew up, and health spending by the provincial governments grew as well. The federal government decided to make some political hay. I recall very clearly, when I came here as a member, the first speech that then Prime Minister Jean Chrétien made when he was in Europe. He gave the President of France a piece of advice. He suggested that he do what we did in Canada, leave health entirely to the provinces and then make decisions. For example, for emergency room waiting rooms, he could enact a law and decide to cut waiting time in the ER. He did not manage a single hospital. It made no sense. It is all very well to do that when, in France, it is the central government that manages all the hospitals.

That is the reality. If the Liberals wanted that, they should have told the provinces they were going...

• (1645)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Resuming debate. The hon. member for Verchères—Les Patriotes.

Business of Supply

Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have heard many members in the House talk about the health file specifically and the federal government's interference in that area. It is obvious that the options put forward by the other parties are, as my colleague, the member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel said, aimed at centralizing all health-related matters in Parliament, at that level of government.

But it is clear to Quebeckers that, under the Constitution, health is the exclusive domain of the Quebec and provincial governments. And regardless of the party in power, the Quebec government has repeatedly expressed that in its statements and demands, as well as its concrete actions.

And it is precisely that aspect of the problem that I want to address this afternoon. I am the health critic for the Bloc Québécois. Throughout my entire political and parliamentary career in the House, I have had the opportunity to pit my ideas against those of my colleagues in other political parties. I have also had the opportunity to see how those same colleagues in other political parties in Canada view health care and its future.

One need only consider what the Standing Committee on Health has done in recent months. It studied the whole issue of human resources in the health sector and would have the federal government tell the provinces how to manage their human resources in the health sector. It even went so far as to give the Quebec and provincial governments advice on health education. Under the Constitution, however, education is another area within the exclusive jurisdiction of the Quebec and provincial governments. Once again, we get the sense that our colleagues in other political parties in Canada feel the need to say that this Parliament should have a role in health. And there are other examples.

I can understand them. Any intervention in the health sector has a direct impact on the population. As I have often said, intervention gives them an opportunity to toot their own horn and say that they are doing good work that is helping people. But, from the Bloc Québécois's point view, it is clear that the federal government should do that only in areas under its own jurisdiction.

We see this in various statements, bills, tax measures and budget measures. The government's initiatives belie the promise the Prime Minister, who was then the leader of the Conservative Party, made during the 2006 election campaign to limit the federal spending power. We have seen no sign that he wants to make good on that promise. What we have seen is that with his government's various policies, he has carried on the Liberal tradition of intruding into areas outside federal jurisdiction.

The measure I want to use as an example is extremely worthwhile. It was in Bill C-9, the budget implementation bill, which was passed in the House because the Liberals decided to support the Conservative government. They did not have the backbone to get all their members into the House to vote against the budget implementation bill. If this measure had come from a provincial government, it would have been completely fair, because it was directly related to health. But since it comes from the federal government, which has no constitutional jurisdiction over health, we want to know what it is doing in the bill. What the government is doing is interfering.

● (1650)

It is using federal money for initiatives in areas that are outside federal jurisdiction. I will tell hon. members what was in Bill C-9, the budget implementation bill, which was passed. The government allocated \$13.5 million to the Rick Hansen Foundation, a not-for-profit organization whose goal is to speed progress toward a cure for spinal cord injuries and improve the quality of life of people with such injuries. This is extremely worthwhile and commendable, and it is what health care is all about. People come to us because they are ill and they need support. It is important that the appropriate government take action and develop strategies and programs to address people's needs. It is not up to the federal government to intrude into these jurisdictions because of its spending power.

There are other examples. Organizations that support patient groups, people with specific illnesses, are all calling on the federal government to establish Canada-wide strategies, national strategies, as the government calls them. In the Bloc Québécois, when we talk about anything national we are talking about Quebec, our nation that we are so proud of. These organizations are calling for standards and guidelines at all levels of government to come up with strategies for the entire country that respect the areas of jurisdiction. As I was saying, health is not a federal government jurisdiction.

There is no shortage of examples to illustrate the intrusions, the encroachments and the constant duplication of the federal government, Liberal and Conservative alike, when it comes to the exclusive jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces over health care. Sections 92.7 and 92.16 of the Constitution Act, 1867 clearly stipulate that health care and social services fall within the exclusive jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. I am referring to the relevant sections just to prove that this is not a party line or my own idea. From as far back as 1919, Ottawa has been intervening increasingly in these sectors, even forcing Quebec and the provinces to comply with so-called national standards and objectives.

I will list a series of events that have occurred since 1919 to show to what extent the federal government has ignored these two sections of the Constitution by interfering in the health care sector. In 1919, the Department of Health was created; in 1957, the federal Hospital Insurance and Diagnostic Services Act was passed; in 1966, the Medical Care Act was passed; in 1984, the Canada Health Act was passed; in 2004, the Public Health Agency of Canada was created; and in 2007, another commission was created by the federal government to take up even more space in this jurisdiction belonging exclusively to Quebec and the provinces under the Constitution. I am talking about the Canadian Mental Health Commission.

In view of all this, it is clear that the Government of Canada, Liberal and Conservative alike, has decided over time to take its place in the health care sector even though it has no business there.

Business of Supply

•(1655)

Like my Bloc Québécois colleagues have said throughout the afternoon, if the government really wants the people that it represents to have access to better services, it should simply give to the provinces the means they need to carry out this responsibility. Instead of spending this money freely, and rarely in concert with the provinces, it should give it to them, through tax point transfers. This would give Quebec and the provinces the means to adequately carry out their responsibility, which is to give priority to the health of our fellow citizens. Of course, these concerns can also be ours, but the actions that result from these concerns and that are taken in this Parliament must absolutely respect the fact that health is a jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces.

Another aspect of federal interference in health has to do with research and education. By creating research institutes, whose mandate is to provide better health products and services and to strengthen Canada's health system, the government is once again—because of its tendency to always control more—further encroaching upon areas which, under the Constitution, fall outside federal jurisdiction.

The Bloc Québécois has often said that investments in research are necessary. However, it is important to point out that, through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the federal government is giving itself the power to impose its priorities and views on the health sector. This goes way beyond research as such.

I have said repeatedly in the House that the Bloc Québécois wants the federal government to substantially increase research budgets. We think this money should be transferred to Quebec, so that it can invest it according to its own criteria, and without any condition.

The whole educational component is often connected to research. Education is not a federal jurisdiction. It comes exclusively under the governments of Quebec and the provinces. Therefore, all the money needed to fund our university sector should be distributed by the governments of Quebec and the provinces. That is their responsibility.

As I mentioned, and as my colleagues have said throughout the afternoon, since I am convinced that all hon. members are aware of the importance of this sector, it is crucial that the money be available and that this government adequately carries out this responsibility by transferring tax points to Quebec and the provinces.

•(1700)

Throughout the history of Quebec, governments have taken a stand and demanded that the federal government stop interfering in the health file and stop dictating to Quebec, by its actions, how it should carry out its responsibilities in the area of health.

Governments of all political persuasions, not just sovereignist governments, took this position for Quebec.

Although I have already spoken about this in the House, I would like to do so again. I would like to speak of the different governments that, over the course of Quebec's history, presented specific demands to the federal government in this regard.

Maurice Duplessis' second government—from August 30, 1944 to September 7, 1959—had the following message:

Quebec considers that the following areas are the exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces: natural resources, the establishment, maintenance and administration of hospitals, asylums and charitable institutions, education in all areas including university studies, the regulation of professions, including the entrance requirements to the practice of medicine and relations between patient and physician, social security, health and public hygiene, the construction of bridges and roads.

Earlier, I gave examples pertaining to human resources management in health care, education, the way in which funds are allocated to our universities, and hence the actions, programs and research our universities must carry out. I also spoke of public health. The government of Maurice Duplessis told the federal government that it was none of its business, that it should look after its own affairs, and to give us our money, the money sent to the federal government, the money that it does not want to give back in order for us to meet our needs. That is what the government of Maurice Duplessis said at the time.

I will also quote another government, the Union Nationale government of Daniel Johnson Sr., in power from June 16, 1966 to September 26, 1968. I would like to highlight the demands and the message of that government with respect to health care and protecting this jurisdiction which, under the Constitution, remains the jurisdiction of Quebec.

To ensure the equality of the French Canadian nation, Quebec needs greater powers. It wants to make its own decisions in certain areas: 1) development of its human resources (i.e. every aspect of education, social security and health); 2) economic affirmation (i.e. the power to implement economic and financial mechanisms); 3) cultural expression (arts, letters and the French language); 4) the influence of the Quebec community.

Even back then, there was talk about every aspect of health, and not small exceptions here and there.

It also said “the power to implement economic and financial mechanisms”. We just have to look at what the federal government wants to do with its Canada-wide securities commission. It wants to undermine Quebec's power to take its economy in its own hands and therefore centralize everything in Toronto once again. Does that not prove that what Daniel Johnson Sr. was saying is still current?

He was also advocating for cultural expression, in the arts, literature and the French language, and that is what we have been constantly asking the House to do: to transfer those powers to Quebec and the funds that come with those powers because Quebec is a strong and creative nation and we need to be able to invest all our resources in those areas.

I would also like to talk about Robert Bourassa, if I may.

After the Meech Lake accord, Robert Bourassa said that under the Canadian Constitution, social and health care issues indisputably fell within the exclusive power of the provinces.

Robert Bourassa also told the federal government to mind its own business. The Bloc Québécois is asking the same thing today.

I hope that all the hon. members of the House have understood the message and will vote in favour of this motion.

Business of Supply

• (1705)

[English]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member will know the Canada Health Act has five basic principles: universality, available to all, publicly administered and funded, comprehensive, accessible and portable. As long as a province respects the five principles of the Canada Health Act, those transfers are fine.

Members will know that one of the problems we have had in a number of provinces is that there has been this leakage out of the public system into privately provided health care for those who are prepared to pay for it over and above the taxes they pay. It is a system for the rich.

If there were an opt out in a transfer to compensation, there is a risk. I would suggest the private health care system would flourish in Quebec, that only the rich, those who could afford to pay, would be able to get health care and there would be leakage of health care professionals out of the public system. The best and the brightest would clearly be moving into the private sector where they could get more compensation for their services. This would be the beginning of the end of public health care in Canada and Quebec.

Could the member explain to us what do we do about first nations, which are totally federally funded? What do we do about our shared research? What do we do about providing for pandemics? What do we do to protect available, comprehensive, accessible health care for the poor, for those who could not afford the private health care system that the member was promoting?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Malo: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

Indeed, the federal government is responsible for specific groups under the Constitution. One example is first nations communities. When I hear him say that, I have to wonder why is it that the Standing Committee on Health has had first nations groups appear before it to say that they do not even have clean drinking water. That is a federal responsibility and the government is not even fulfilling it.

After that, the government has the nerve to say that Ottawa must oversee what all of the provinces are doing, even though it cannot even take care of the groups it is responsible for. Once again, Ottawa knows best.

The hon. member is telling us that the Government of Ontario—and the member represents a riding in Ontario—cannot even see the health care problems there. Of course, nothing is perfect we are not trying to suggest otherwise here today. Even if this government were to suddenly stop interfering in health care, all of the problems facing our health care systems would not necessarily go away. However, that does not matter, because when it comes to governments that assume their responsibilities, that know the problems, that really know how it works and know the institutions they are responsible for, those are the governments that will have the resources, because the federal government will have transferred to them the funds owing to them. That money comes from taxpayers who send half of their taxes to Ottawa. They will have the means to ensure the sustainability of health care systems.

Regarding his comments about the possible leakage of capital, I would simply suggest that he go back to his provincial government, the Government of Ontario, and clearly say to it that he does not trust it to properly look after the health care system. That is not what people are telling the Bloc Québécois. People are telling the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. Questions and comments. The hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel.

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to congratulate my colleague from Verchères—Les Patriotes, our very capable health critic.

I know that my colleague is well aware of the situation. All of the members in this House need to understand that 53% of Quebecers' tax money goes to Ottawa, keeping in mind that corporate taxes are higher in Ottawa than in Quebec. That is the reality. Is there a way that Quebecers can do what they want with their money when it comes to health?

It upset me to hear the Liberal member. The Government of Canada, which runs only one hospital in Quebec, the Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue veterans' hospital, is currently negotiating to have Quebec run it because it is not capable of doing so. That is the reality. The fact is that none of its 10,000 civil servants can run hospitals. I would like to hear my colleague's comments on that.

• (1710)

Mr. Luc Malo: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member very much for his remarks.

His example is certainly relevant because, once again, he has shown that, as he said himself in his speech, Health Canada officials do not administer hospitals, they do not manage waiting lists and they do not treat patients. That is not what they do. The hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel says that the federal government wants to walk away from the only hospital it is responsible for because it is not up to the task. This is quite logical because, as I told my Liberal colleague who asked the question, that kind of expertise is in the hands of the governments of Quebec and the provinces, as it always has been. They are the ones who really know the needs of the patients. They are the ones who administer hospitals, they are the ones who manage and train staff. As I said, education is in the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. That is why the hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel asks how it is that, with the money that Quebecers give to the federal government, they are not able to get the funds necessary to improve all their systems, specifically through tax points. That is what is important. I am sure that is what all hon. members of this House want. They want money to be managed in the best possible way and tax money from the public to go to important areas. So it should go back to the governments that are the best at properly managing the health care system.

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS***[English]*

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, the debate has been very interesting. However, I am curious if the member would care to comment on a quote from the current Prime Minister, which appeared in a *National Post* article dated January 26, 2001. It said:

Alberta should also argue that each province should raise its own revenue for health care—i.e., replace Canada Health and Social Transfer cash with tax points as Quebec has argued for many years. Poorer provinces would continue to rely on Equalization to ensure they have adequate revenues.

It would appear the Prime Minister concurs with the motion of the Bloc Québécois today.

Could the member try to speculate as to why the Prime Minister of Canada feels that Quebec, as well as Alberta, should have the right to effectively sever itself from Canada?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Malo: Mr. Speaker, all provinces should have the means necessary to ensure that the people for whom they are responsible have access to the best possible health care.

During the 2006 election campaign, the Prime Minister promised to limit the federal spending power. He did so precisely because it is perfectly normal that, in the areas over which Quebec and the provinces have jurisdiction—and I am not just talking about health, all initiatives should be going in the same direction with no overlap and with no programs working at cross-purposes. That is perfectly normal.

The problem, however, is that the Prime Minister made the promise and never acted on it. We simply hope that he will support this motion and that he will follow through on the promise that he made during the election campaign. The Bloc Québécois has always been clear on the matter because it is Quebec's traditional position. As I said, even since the days of Maurice Duplessis, we have been asking the federal government to mind its own business.

• (1715)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): As it is 5:15 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, all questions necessary to dispose of the opposition motion are deemed put and a recorded division is deemed requested and deferred until Tuesday, October 26, 2010, at the expiry of the time provided for government orders.

[English]

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:30 p.m.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

*[English]***NATIONAL PHILANTHROPY DAY ACT**

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC) moved that Bill S-203, An Act respecting a National Philanthropy Day, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to stand in the House this evening and bring forward a private member's bill that stands in my name. The bill comes from the other place and is called an act respecting a national philanthropy day.

This will come as interesting news to most Canadians, inasmuch as many Canadians believe there already is a National Philanthropy Day, and in fact there is. Last year, November 15 was declared as the first National Philanthropy Day. Our Minister of Heritage at that point made that declaration. Today we are now talking about putting legislation through to backstop that commitment by our Minister of Heritage, declaring November 15 henceforth as National Philanthropy Day.

There are a number of people in our country who know what philanthropy is and who philanthropists are. However, it is important for us to go through this. I will give my perspective of who I believe are the philanthropists, what makes them unique and why it is important that we have a day that recognizes the contributions of those individuals.

As I was thinking about what makes a philanthropist or what is philanthropy, I started to think about my upbringing and what my thoughts were when I heard of philanthropy, or when I started to understand what that word meant. To a great degree, I heard the word used in newscasts. I would hear about a philanthropist who had done this or a philanthropist who had done that. Usually these were people who had great wealth and were making contributions or large gifts in kind to institutions. These were worthwhile and they were important declarations and contributions to important institutions. When I started to think about this, I wondered if that was the only type of philanthropist.

Canadians need to have an inclusive view of who philanthropists are and what philanthropy is. I would use the definition that a philanthropist is somebody who will give of themselves to another person to benefit another person's life.

It is important for us to consider all of those people who continue, on a daily, monthly and weekly basis, to give time, energy and dollars to causes in which they believe. It is important we become very inclusive as to who we are declaring philanthropists as part of this legislation and what in fact philanthropy is.

Private Members' Business

When I was in Sunday school, I heard the story of a widow who came to give an offering. She had a couple of copper coins and she gave them. There were other people who were giving great gifts. They were giving large amounts of money. I remember the story ended with the declaration that the person who had given the most was the person who had given what most of us would have thought was the least. The lady who had given her last couple of coins she needed to survive on had given freely. The other people, while their gifts were much larger, had given out of their wealth. They had only given a part of what they owned. We have to recognize that there are those people who every day give of themselves, give more than they probably can afford to give to make somebody else's life better.

When I think of my own upbringing, my family was a family that gave. When I was younger, my parents did not have a lot. My brothers and I have this ongoing joke that if there was a pie, or muffins, or cinnamon buns sitting on the counter, we would always have to ask if they were for us or for the neighbours. The joke is that we were a bunch of hungry boys and we basically starved because more often than not, it was for the neighbours. To this day, we go over to my mom's house and we often pester my her by asking if the food on the table is for us or if it is for the neighbours.

● (1720)

This has become a joke in our family because, in truth, my mom is one of those philanthropists, those people who stand up and say, "It does not matter what is going on in my own life. I am going to encourage somebody else by giving my time and energy to support someone who could really use it".

Interestingly, two weeks ago I arrived home and my wife was making cinnamon buns with my daughters. I walked in and grabbed at one of the pans of cinnamon buns, and my wife said, "No, don't take those". I asked why not and she said they were for the neighbours. I guess history repeats itself, and I am proud that virtue is being taught and passed on to my kids. It is something that I think most members in the House can relate to at one level or another.

Our government believes very strongly in the opportunities that should be available, and we should make it easier for people to give to the causes they strongly believe in. Over the last number of budgets, our government has brought in different initiatives that have made it easier for Canadians to give donations of different types to charities of their choice. There is now an opportunity for people to pass on investments with tax provisions for those donations.

We also have an opportunity in this country now to make contributions of gifts in kind of lands that are to be protected for ecological reasons. Our government believes that while it can do important things about the gaps in our social safety net and a number of other things, it is not the only partner in this effort. There need to be opportunities and encouragement for people to stand and support their neighbours and important causes as well.

Our Prime Minister and finance minister have led by example through bringing forward legislation, but one of the more poignant moments in the last couple of years that gripped all Canadians was the earthquake in Haiti. There was an outpouring by Canadians for the people who were suffering in Haiti, having experienced one of the most devastating natural disasters I can recall. This, of course, was on top of the fact that they had so little to begin with.

I recall very clearly that people lined up to make donations. It was not just people who were wealthy. It was people from all walks of life. It was such an encouragement to see our Prime Minister standing in line with his wife making a personal donation to this cause. This is a demonstration of what it is to be a philanthropist.

In my own community I saw countless people lined up to volunteer for different charity events and provide their support. There were kids clubs in my constituency that believed they might be able to contribute to help in the devastation in the aftermath of the Haiti earthquake.

More recently, Canadians had the opportunity to donate to causes in Newfoundland. There was a group of students in my constituency that gave to Haiti, which was important because it saw the devastation there, but another group said it saw a lady on the news who had lost her house and it wanted to find out who she was because it wanted to help her. These young people are also philanthropists; they are demonstrating philanthropy.

We know the devastation that many people in Africa have experienced as a result of natural disasters and a number of other things, including the AIDS epidemic and the mismanagement of many of the nations in terms of governance. Many people in our country have stood alongside these folks in different ways.

This past Christmas, I had an opportunity to hold a fundraiser in my constituency for an orphanage in Africa. It is an orphanage that predominantly brings in kids who are orphaned as a result of AIDS.

● (1725)

We as a community raised in excess of \$20,000 at a breakfast. We then did a number of other things. In the end we raised more than \$250,000 to help support this orphanage that now cares for more than 2,200 kids on a daily basis.

Philanthropy comes in many ways, shapes and forms, and of course there is the legacy that has been established in Canada. Most predominantly, when we look back on the history of this great nation, we can look at the legacy of church groups and church organizations in our country. We look at the Catholic Church, which established missions early on in the exploration and development of this country, and many of those groups continue today to do good work. We look to a number of other churches that may have less of a history in this nation, but are doing important work, when we look at inner city ministries, when we look at the Salvation Army that continues to reach out to those most in need.

When we look at these different organizations and these groups that do amazing work, we can see that they are philanthropists all the way through their process. If it be the people who are standing to collect the money, if be it the Salvation Army bell ringer in the local supermarket, if it be the person who is out there collecting donations of clothes, furniture or different things to be sold at the thrift stores, if it be the people who bring food from their homes so that they can be served at soup kitchens or the people who write the cheque to help support these things, there are so many different philanthropists along the way.

Private Members' Business

I believe that if we are to have a bill that recognizes philanthropy and philanthropists in this country, we have to make it absolutely clear that we will recognize all of these people. It is not to be the recognition of those people who would otherwise have statues of bronze located at the entrances of hospitals, or those people who will be on the front pages of the newspaper as they hand over their \$4 million cheques for a good cause. These people are absolutely important and we want to recognize them in this legislation, but we also want to recognize those people who give out of their poverty, in time, in money or in some other manifestation. I think it is important that we as Canadians make that declaration clear as we proceed with the recognition of philanthropists and philanthropy in this country on November 15.

This summer I had the unfortunate opportunity to spend a fair bit of time at the University of Alberta Hospital. My brother, who is just younger than I, was diagnosed with leukemia. I would spend a fair bit of time there on the weekends. As I was walking through the hospital in between treatments, I noticed that there were several opportunities at every corridor to recognize people who had made contributions.

At that point I knew I would be bringing forward this bill in the House, and I thought it was interesting, so I spent a fair bit of time to try to understand a little bit about the people who were recognized on these walls. Very, very quickly I recognized that there were people of all walks of life, both rich and poor, who had given. That is one of the great things about philanthropy. It is the one place we can all contribute. It is the most democratic exercise of supporting fellow Canadians and fellow citizens in this world.

It is my privilege to support and to bring forward this bill in the House of Commons, and I hope members from all parties will help recognize the men and women who have and who will continue to build this country into the great country that it is.

• (1730)

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I applaud the speech my colleague has made on philanthropy.

This Liberal bill has been a very important bill that has come from the Senate. Senators Grafstein and Mercer have worked on this for a number of years and put a lot of time into it. I am hopeful that everybody in the House will support it.

I want to ask him about one specific issue, just to get his point of view in terms of giving. As all members know, there is a very different benefit to giving money to politics than there is to giving money to charities in Canada. It is a much greater tax credit for supporting political parties, because politicians make the rules.

I wonder if my colleague would be supportive of changing the tax laws so that giving to the Heart and Stroke Foundation or the local food bank would be of equal benefit at tax time as giving to a political party.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, the member has long supported this bill, and I do thank him for his support and his continued effort. Had I not scrambled to bring this bill forward in the House, I know it would have fallen under my colleague's name. It's

wonderful to see, on a bill like this, that we can work together across party lines.

In terms of the tax credit, I think this is an issue that we as parliamentarians do need to address. I think there are people from all sides who believe that there need to be some changes in this respect.

Today as we are talking about philanthropy and philanthropists, I think it is important to recognize that people do not give in this country simply because they get a tax credit. Yes, it is good, and yes, it is a benefit, but people give because they believe in helping others. This bill is to recognize those people who give of themselves for the benefit of somebody else.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member will know that in 2008, because of the recession, charitable donations in both the United States and Canada took a substantial drop. The member will also know that billionaires such as Warren Buffett and Bill Gates have not only committed to give half of their net worth to charities, while they are alive or upon death, but they have challenged other billionaires in the United States to follow suit. They have a fairly substantial group on board on this.

I am not aware of any similar activity in Canada on that front. Could the member tell me if he is aware of any activities on the part of billionaires in Canada to get together and follow what Warren Buffet and Bill Gates are spearheading in the United States?

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, to be quite frank, I do not know any billionaires. I do not know many Canadians who do. There are a few in the country, and I leave it to them to make decisions as to how they will give.

Philanthropy and philanthropists are characterized not by being forced by somebody, by moral suasion or other things, but by making a decision in and of themselves to give. I think it is absolutely important that we move from the recognition of just the billionaires and millionaires and recognize people who give, full stop, regardless of the size of the donation. There are people in this country who give day in and day out of their time and effort.

There is a famous saying that success is measured not by what you have but by what you give. It should be measured by that. I subscribe to that and I think the hon. member does.

In terms of billionaires, I do not know any and I do not know if there is any plan for them to give. However, we need to recognize all the people who give, and that is why I think this bill is important. I think it is important that all members of Parliament endorse the idea that we recognize all those people who continue to give in and of themselves.

• (1735)

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill S-203. The history of this bill goes back a ways.

For a number of years, Senator Jerry Grafstein and Senator Mercer have been working on producing this bill so that we can officially make November 15 philanthropy day in Canada. Both senators have a long history of philanthropic involvement, community involvement, and giving back to the community. They worked very hard at this.

Private Members' Business

In the last House it was S-217. It passed the Senate. It came to this place, and we moved it through the House. Then, and after prorogation it died and came back as S-203. It went to the Senate again, and I intended to bring it forward. As the member from Peace River said, he scrambled a bit and brought it forward.

The bottom line is that we now have an opportunity to come together as a Parliament and get this bill through.

It is important. It matters to many people. Like everyone in the House, I guess, I have been involved in a lot of not-for-profit organizations. I have been the President of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Nova Scotia, and I have served on the national board. I have worked with literacy, food banks, junior achievement, CNIB, and a number of organizations. We come to meet some fabulous people who give an awful lot to their communities.

When I travel in my own community, I am constantly amazed at the dedicated work that people do every day, like the people who gather in a church in the north end of Dartmouth every Wednesday to provide food to the poor. There are people like Doris McArcher, who has a clothing depot in a church in Dartmouth, where she collects clothes for people who need them. She does not ask them if they need help. In the winter, she provides the coats, pants, scarves, and hats because she knows that if people come to get her help it is because they need it.

A lot of faith-based people are doing this kind of work. They do this in the belief that God would want them to. There are people who do not believe in God who also do this kind of work. Whatever the motivation, these good people should be recognized.

In my own life, I have two active children who play hockey and soccer. They paddle on the great lakes in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. My daughter is in Brownies, tennis, and golf. Even at the school, it is important to have volunteers because of the crisis in funding these days. None of these things would be possible without people who would coach, manage, and do the kinds of things that make it possible for kids to enjoy the activities that we want them to be part of.

In the church I go to, there are people like my wife who teach Sunday school, there are people in the choir, and there are people who fill other roles. These are all philanthropic acts and they are important.

We should never diminish the importance of people who give money. It is so important to give to those who do not have. My sister is involved in the Association of Fundraising Professionals. She is a fundraiser with the Canadian Cancer Society and is involved in AFP organizations like Imagine Canada, which is helping to build the philanthropic sector.

We know that recent times have been challenging. An Imagine Canada report from last August quotes a few statistics on the difficulties that charities are facing. For example, more than half of charities are experiencing increased demand for their products and services. Compared with 2009, more charities are reporting that they are at risk, experiencing increased demand, or both. The percentage of charities under high stress has increased to 17%. The financial situation of many charities has stagnated or deteriorated slightly. On

average, charities report that revenues have dropped by 1.1%, while expenditures have risen by almost 4%.

It is always a challenge to get people to work in the not-for-profit sector, but now it is particularly difficult. Operating charities report that the average number of paid staff has decreased by 4.4%. In spite of the challenges, however, the level of confidence is high.

As a group, charity leaders are remarkably confident in the future, because the people who work in charities, in the not-for-profit sector, are optimistic people. They see the challenges but they do not shy away from them. They see the obstacles, but they decide that they are going to overcome them.

I think that this is an important thing. My colleague from Peace River spoke about growing up in his family. In my own family, which was a large, kind of boisterous family, we belonged to the Foster Parents Plan. We would make our donations, and we would write letters back and forth to understand what was happening with children in other parts of the world who were not quite so fortunate.

● (1740)

It is interesting to look at who gives money in Canada. It is not always people in big cities. It is not always people with deep pockets. Quite often it is people in places like Cape Breton, Nova Scotia and Pictou County. Some of the people one would think are not doing well economically are the ones who pitch in and help. It is part of the ethic of growing up in a small community. It is the old ethic of pitching in and helping out. If somebody's house is on fire, the place is rebuilt. If somebody needs help, a bake sale is held. The spirit of giving that seems to exist in many parts of small-town Canada carries on today.

There is no question that there are challenges in the fundraising sector for the not-for-profit organizations. People who raise money, like Peter Bessey from Scotiabank, who is heading up a campaign for the Canadian Cancer Society in Nova Scotia, face certain challenges. We have the power in this place to recognize these people. We can use the power that comes with being a member of Parliament. We know that what these people do matters. We know that what they do builds a better country. It is important that we take the opportunity, like the one that presents itself in Bill S-203, to recognize the people who build a better world.

Earlier this year, I had the chance to speak here about a woman named Ruth Goldbloom, who was the driving force behind Pier 21. My leader, the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, had a chance to go to Pier 21. He had a chance to connect with relatives in his past. Pier 21 would not have happened if Ruth Goldbloom had not been the driving force. Ruth recognizes that all the people who have worked at Pier 21 are important, whether they have given \$1 million, as seven people have, or whether they work in the gift shop to help people when they visit Pier 21. She believes that all these people deserve to be recognized.

The voluntary sector in Canada is huge and it cannot be replaced by paid work. It cannot be replaced by people who do things professionally. It cannot be replaced because there is not the commitment, the optimism, and the sheer dedication that happens in the voluntary sector in Canada. It is incumbent upon this House to recognize the people who do that work and in some way tell them that we appreciate them.

I am looking at an article in the Toronto *Star* entitled "Women are Changing the Face of Philanthropy". The article refers to the hon. Margaret Norrie McCain, who is a great philanthropist in Nova Scotia. I will quote from this article:

Many women today use their influence to give more strategically, and in different ways, than men or women did in the past...They have adopted new models, such as giving circles, to bring like-minded donors together to pool their resources in support of a common cause. "Women give to organizations that they have some connection with," says Maria Antonakos of Opus Philanthropic Strategies Inc.

Philanthropy has been around a long time in many different ways at many different levels. But it does change. It does reflect the marketplace. When we have a recession, as we have had over the last couple of years and continue to have, it hurts, and it disproportionately hurts organizations that deal with those people who need the most help.

We should recognize the work that people do. We should recognize those who give in small ways, but also the people who give big money, like those in my own community: the Risleys, the Rowes, the O'Regans, the Fountains, the Goldblooms, the Sobeys, the Jodeys, the Keatings, the McFees and Smithers, the Conrad family, the Spatsis, the Flemings, the Edwards, and the Dennis family, who own the Chronicle Herald.

These are the people who build Canada. Their work cannot be replaced. It is not about financially rewarding the people who are raising money. It is incumbent upon us and the Parliament of Canada to tell them that we understand what they do, we know it is important, we know it builds a better country. It builds a better community for all of us. We want to say thanks by making November 15 philanthropy day in Canada. I urge all members to support this bill.

• (1745)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on Bill S-203. By the way, I rose in this House in support of this bill exactly one year ago today.

My party supports this bill. We are in favour of this initiative and we hope that it will provide a way not only of recognizing the contributions of numerous Quebecers and Canadians who live by the values of generosity, altruism and compassion, but also of encouraging more people to give generously.

As many colleagues who have risen before me have said, these values are learned when people are very young. Often, it is our parents who teach us to be generous. The hon. member who introduced this bill in the House said that he had been taught generosity at a young age. I think that this was also true in my father's case. He was a policeman and he taught us that some families did not have food. And so when he had enough money, he

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was able to help little children by giving them a small reward, as no one in their homes was in a position to give them any cash.

Many Quebecers live by the principle of generosity. It goes without saying that it would be hard to stand up in this House and argue against the creation of such a day, not only because these groups promote values, such as generosity, altruism and compassion, but also because November 15 is already a familiar date in North America. The Association of Fundraising Professionals, an organization that originated in the United States and now comprises over 200 chapters worldwide, including one in Quebec, has been celebrating this day since 1990 as a way of highlighting the contribution of philanthropists, who make the planet a richer place. Philanthropy is also about enriching the heart.

This bill, if passed, will make official the event that occurs every year on November 15, an event that Quebec, Canadian and international organizations already celebrate. The recognition of this House will only serve to give the day even more weight. It will give it even more credibility and, I hope, will make more people aware of the benefits of philanthropy.

Now, what in this bill exactly might help to increase awareness among people, and encourage them to engage in philanthropic endeavours? Allow me to talk a little about the situation in Quebec in this regard, so that people can get a better sense of why it is appropriate to increase public awareness of philanthropy.

Traditionally, Quebecers gave less because they felt it was up to the state or the church to provide funding for health and social problems. For example, in the 1980s in Quebec, philanthropy was associated more with the church, which helped meet people's needs at a time when the state could not, or with volunteer activities. It was harder to identify individuals or private companies that worked full-time in philanthropic endeavours. That is no longer true today, because we are seeing a shift from traditional philanthropy to much more strategic philanthropy where upper-class individuals try to apply business models to charitable organizations to achieve concrete results.

With the waning of the church and the rise of the welfare state, Quebecers felt it was the state's responsibility to look after the poor. Little by little, though, philanthropic organizations developed, were recognized by the public and raised awareness of their causes.

For a long time, Quebecers were considered to be less generous, but nowadays, Quebecers are giving more and more to charitable organizations. Huge donations of over \$500,000 are on the rise. But Quebecers are known for making small donations. Fifty-one per cent of them give between \$1 and \$2,000. This was reflected in the donations made following the earthquake in Haiti. More people in Quebec than in the rest of Canada made donations, but Quebecers' donations were smaller. So I do have to qualify what I said.

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According to a generosity index measured by Épisode, a fundraising consulting firm and Léger Marketing, Quebecers are still half as generous as other Canadians. On average, they give \$220, compared to \$437 for other Canadians. While 76% of Canadians gave to charity in 2009, only 69% of Quebecers did.

• (1750)

This statement may not be entirely correct. It is misleading to say that Quebecers are less generous than other Canadians. They might make a number of donations that they never claim on their taxes.

We see here that Quebecers donate, but might not claim as much on their taxes. Whether this statement is true or false, this debate about whether Quebecers are generous or not from a philanthropic point of view, illustrates the need to raise more public awareness about the benefits of philanthropy.

It is impossible to ignore the significant support from philanthropists in society, both regionally and globally in areas where government does not meet public needs. Today, needs are great and measures from the Canadian government and other governments are not successfully reducing poverty, either domestically or internationally. Instead of addressing the problem, governments prefer to rely on altruistic or strategic humanitarian agencies to make up for the shortfall.

This means that we cannot only count on philanthropy to help everyone. The government still has a very important role to play, but it comes up short and ends up relying more and more on philanthropists to provide aid and services. Let us use this day as an opportunity to remind the Canadian government of the aid and services it has to provide the public.

For example, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the gap between the rich and the middle and poorer classes has grown steadily in the past 10 years. This is a concern, and the public should not have to carry the burden.

I believe that the general public steps up to the plate when a charity asks for help or when an agency asks for support for its cause to help research in areas such as health, for instance.

We know that people give generously. Just think of the Multiple Sclerosis Society or Alzheimer's Society. I often participate in the events that they organize in my riding. It is evident that people are interested in this issue. We also see that the government has failed to provide adequate resources, whether for research or to help organizations that establish activities requiring the support of many volunteers.

It would also be a day to think about all the volunteers who work for these organizations, who give generously of their time, and who believe in these activities and in improving living conditions.

In my riding, the Fondation Gilles Kègle comes to mind. Gilles Kègle is a street nurse who provides a great deal of help to the most disadvantaged. Without the support of the general public who donate to this foundation, he would never be able to help as many people as he does. Furthermore, without the help of the hundreds of volunteers, this generosity would not be as effective. We know that this organization meets a very great need. In this context,

philanthropy is a new social actor. I am also thinking about the new shift from traditional philanthropy to strategic philanthropy.

Earlier on, a colleague spoke—I no longer remember the name of his riding—and he said that he did not know any rich people in Canada who could give very generously. I would like to point out that the Fondation Lucie et André Chagnon innovated by creating a social PPP, a philanthropic public partnership, with the Government of Quebec. This led to the creation of the Québec en forme program, which establishes various networks of schools, child care facilities, CLSCs and community organizations in order to encourage healthy lifestyles for children from the most disadvantaged areas. We have witnessed the development of new ways to better help society and we have the utmost respect for what the Fondation Lucie et André Chagnon has undertaken.

• (1755)

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as always, it is an incredible honour for me to stand in this House as a representative of the people of the region of Timmins—James Bay. I am proud to speak on behalf of the New Democratic Party tonight on Bill S-203, National Philanthropy Day Act.

There is a false philosophy that I think has corrupted much of our world in the last century, a philosophy that says people only do things out of self-interest. We see that with the great social heretic Ayn Rand and her belief that greed was good, that if people were greedy the world would somehow be a better place, and this idea of enlightened self-interest that people are somehow helping the world by looking out for number one, and of course, the people who fall by the wayside are left to fall by the wayside.

We know this argument is flawed on so many different levels, because people do so much without a thought of self-interest. In fact, I would argue that people are fundamentally motivated to do and to change the world, and to help their neighbour because they feel compelled to do it, not just because they feel good about it and not because it makes them feel somehow better but because it is what is in our fundamental DNA as human beings.

Whenever there is an issue, whenever there is a crisis, we will see the goodness of human beings, and I would say, the goodness of human beings overriding sometimes the more negative aspects of human beings.

In my riding of Timmins—James Bay, whenever there is a house fire, the neighbours come together. They start to look out for each other. In fact, I have found that the poorer the community, often the more people are willing to give.

This is the desire, perhaps, for us to examine the issue of a philanthropy day. I am not quibbling with the idea behind this motion; the only question I would have is that I do not think many people would consider themselves philanthropists.

“Philanthropy” comes from the original Greek words, and there are various Greek words for love or for care. There is “eros”, which we would use as “erotic”, the physical form of love. There is “philo”, which becomes philanthropy. There is the other word for love, which is “agape”, which is a much deeper, spiritual, religious love. Philanthropy comes from this original Greek word.

What it has come to mean, specifically within our culture, is the certain class of people who give from their excess, the millionaires and billionaires, as one member referred to. My colleague from Alberta said this should not be a day just about recognition of millionaires and billionaires, it should be a recognition of all those who give. That is certainly something I think we can all agree on.

However, the term “philanthropist” does, by its general nature, exclude everyone who gives. It has a much more specific meaning. If we were looking to talk about everyone who gives, perhaps we would call it “national help your neighbour day”.

The philanthropist tradition is certainly known in the United States, probably more so than anyplace else. In the 19th century, there were the great billionaires, the Rockefellers, the Carnegies, the Guggenheims. Anybody who has ever been to New York City will see the immense wealth of these mass, giant capitalist families. After a certain point of building their industries, they started to put their wealth into philanthropic organizations.

In my region of Timmins—James Bay, we have a Carnegie library in the town of New Liskeard. There is a Carnegie library in Sudbury. The Guggenheims did a phenomenal amount of work in terms of bringing modern art to New York. They did that from their position of immense wealth.

To encourage people like the modern-day Rockefellers and ones who are further below them, we have instituted tax credits so that we encourage the wealthy and people with money to put aside some of their wealth. They get usually very impressive tax benefits for doing that. There is a role for that within our society.

It is a role to replace the social fabric of our country, which is becoming more and more tattered every day. I think this is where we see in the United States that they have taken a wrong turn in terms of philanthropy. We now see a new age of great philanthropy in the United States that also very much mirrors the 19th century where there were immense wealth disparities.

There is a book out about how these modern billionaires such as the Gates, the Buffetts and the Bonos who have such immense wealth will somehow save the planet.

• (1800)

It is very similar to the 19th century with the Rockefellers and the Carnegies and that age of philanthropy. At that time, the conditions of average society in America and North America was brutal. We have to be careful about lionizing such a massive wealth gap in our country so that the super rich are somehow seen in this modern theory of being able to save the planet.

That is not to take away, in any way, from the work they are doing. It is immense work. We need to encourage them and ensure that the philanthropists in our society are playing specific roles to

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better our society. For example, the Gates Foundation plays a role that government does not do.

However, we have to ensure that we do not expect it to replace the existing social fabric that we have developed co-operatively within the country over the last 140 years. This has made Canada very humane country, a country where we have looked out for each other.

We also need to remember, in recognizing the philanthropists, that we have to recognize the fact that people give so much of themselves without the idea of a tax break, without the idea that they will be ever recognized. That is a much more fundamental driver.

For example, when I was 19 years and my ears were as big as they are now, but I was only 120 pounds, I decided there was a much better role for me in the world than going to school. I became involved in a movement called the Catholic Worker Movement. The Catholic Worker Movement was founded by Dorothy Day, the incredible bohemian writer from New York City who worked with the poor. Dorothy inspired generations of young Catholics to get involved and to work with the poor. However, Dorothy had an amazing principle. She said that if people wanted to donate, they could but there would be no tax credits. She felt that everyone who donated should donate because they actually felt it was important to donate as opposed to just because a foundation or a large organization would donate.

I was about 22 when we bought a house in downtown Toronto. I did not have two pennies to put together. People came together and said that they supported it. We bought a house. We had real estate. Every month, people came with donations and wanted to help the work we were doing with men coming out of prisons, with refugees, with people on the street.

In fact, people wanted to help so much that we would come home some days and we could not get in our door because some school would have donated hundreds of bags of clothing. It would take days to figure out what to do with them. People wanted to give. People wanted to make a difference. Any of our members on any side of the House will say that when there is an issue where there is a cause, people will come forward. They do not necessarily see themselves as philanthropists. It is just what they do.

When we move forward with this, and it is a bill to be supported, the work of public foundations and heritage buildings that are handed over by multimillionaires to be part of a public trust or the money set aside from men and women, who would otherwise build themselves an extra fifth, or sixth or seventh house in the Cayman Islands, to be put into some public good or some public project is to be recommended, and we support the issue of tax credits.

We support the role of philanthropy within our society, but we also have to recognize that we are not all philanthropists just because we give. The meaning of it has become much more specific to a group of people who are within that realm whose names appear on the various boards and foundations, the philanthropists who we recognize.

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However, let us remember that so much of what makes our country move, so much of what makes our country great and so much of what makes our country look out for those who are falling behind, for those who are hungry and for those who are in prison, comes from the general goodness of the people here, the people there and the people all over who give because they would give anyway without ever thinking their name would appear on a plaque or they would get a tax break. They give because it is what they do.

• (1805)

There needs to be some way to recognize that within our society. I would like to move a motion but I do not know what we would call it. At the end day we would maybe call it national Canadian day because we are a society that cares and we have to continue in that process.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak today to Bill S-203 which calls upon the government to set aside November 15 of each year as national philanthropy day.

Philanthropy is indisputably intertwined with the Canadian way of life. From our earliest days as colonies, helping others, volunteering time and extending compassion and empathy to others have shaped who we are today. These qualities, complemented by the dedication and generosity of our founding peoples, have become intrinsic Canadian values.

The tradition of philanthropy is well established. The contributions of our fellow citizens are numerous and diverse and they can be seen in all areas of life. They can be seen in the areas of health, education, social services, sport and leisure, as well as arts and culture. Canadians are generous and contribute generously to others.

This generosity is manifested in different ways: through charitable giving, by volunteering time to charitable and non-profit organizations, and helping a neighbour or colleague. The motivations to give are as varied as the individuals who give. People give their time to support a cause they believe in, to make their contribution to society and to share their skills or even develop new skills.

According to the 2007 Canada survey of giving, volunteering and participating, Canadian selflessness is vibrant and evolving. Approximately 23 million Canadians had made a financial donation to a charitable or other non-profit organization, which represents \$10 billion, a 2.9% increase in the number of donors and a 12% increase in donations compared to 2004.

In 2007, Canadians volunteered almost 2.1 billion hours, equivalent to more than 1 million full-time jobs, a 4.2% increase in hours compared to 2004, and this is in addition to direct support, support not given through an organization. Eighty-four per cent of Canadians provide support or assistance to their neighbours or individuals outside of their families.

Today, volunteering and giving are so well-rooted in the social fabric of Canada that not only do Canadians contribute as individuals, but numerous corporations and institutions give generously often through foundations. More and more corporations and institutions are offering volunteer programs to their employees.

Corporations are aware of the power of their philanthropy on the social and economic capital of our communities. Philanthropy can help corporations build their reputations and also contributes to healthy and strong communities. Furthermore, according to a survey published by Imagine Canada in 2007, corporations that support their communities foster pride and loyalty among their employees.

In addition to significant financial contributions, corporations, such as Molson Coors and the National Bank of Canada, support volunteering through programs for their employees. For example, Molson Coors provides a paid day to its employees to spend participating in a team-based volunteer activity.

In 2005, the National Bank of Canada created the "Our hearts are with you" program to encourage its current and retired employees to volunteer. This program was designed to support, recognize and reward employees' efforts and to enhance the impact of their volunteer work. This program contributes to the success of the many fundraisers and supports the organization of events.

• (1810)

For example, in 2009, for the sixth straight year 1,100 employees from several provinces raised approximately \$330,000 for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. That very same year, National Bank of Canada employees, combined with a matching program offered by their employer, contributed over \$2.7 million to the United Way campaign.

Other corporations prefer to support a specific cause that is in line with their values.

In 1974, Ron Joyce, coordinator of the Tim Hortons chain, created a foundation to honour Tim Horton's love for children and his desire to help those less fortunate. The foundation provides a fun-filled camp environment that is open all year long for thousands of children from communities that have Tim Hortons coffee shops. In 2009, approximately 14,000 children from economically disadvantaged homes benefited from this program.

I would also like to highlight the contribution of institutions like hospitals and schools. They are increasingly adopting volunteer programs, in addition to their existing financial support and fundraising campaigns. Examples of this can be found at the McGill University Health Centre where approximately 1,700 volunteers donate their time, their compassion and their experience to 90 volunteer programs.

Another example is the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario where students from high school and university, along with elderly people and professionals, volunteer thousands of hours of their time and share their expertise.

Since childhood, our children are made aware of the importance of self-sacrifice and the impact this can have on their community. Many schools promote social and community involvement by establishing volunteer programs, such as the program established by the International Baccalaureate, a non-profit educational foundation.

In Canada, 297 private and public schools have adopted this program which requires that students complete a certain number of hours of community service in order to receive their diploma. Other schools have built their own programs, such as the volunteer program of the Académie Parhélie in the Yukon which encourages students to volunteer their time to help others.

In Ontario, all high schools across the province, which includes approximately 700,000 students, need to complete 40 hours of community service to get their high school diploma. This requirement has been in place since 1999. In addition, many students do more hours than they are required and continue to volunteer throughout their lives or return to volunteering once they are adults.

Fostering engagement from childhood raises children's awareness of social involvement, boosts their talents, their sense of organization and increases self-esteem. Although the majority of donors and volunteers prefer to be anonymous and have it kept confidential, the extent of their contributions is recognized in many ways.

One of the ways donors and volunteers are recognized is through National Philanthropy Day on November 15. This day, held the very first time in 1986, is important to many organizations that use this day to celebrate and highlight the contributions of their many generous volunteers and donors.

National Philanthropy Day provides an opportunity for organizations to celebrate their accomplishments, to identify their future needs and to raise awareness within their communities.

I believe that the adoption of a National Philanthropy Day should, first and foremost, encourage Canadians to give of their time and their talents to benefit the causes that are nearest and dearest to them, thus strengthening their communities.

Therefore, as the member for Miramichi, New Brunswick, where people are constantly so willing to help and to volunteer their time for the good of our community, I am happy to support Bill S-203, an act to set aside November 15 of each year as national philanthropy day.

• (1815)

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to again raise in the House the issue that I addressed back in June in question period when I put some questions to the Minister of Justice about a Statistics Canada report that had just been released which showed that hate crimes in Canada

were up by 35% between 2007 and 2008. I will just go over what the report indicated at that time.

Fifty-five per cent of those hate crime incidents were based on race or ethnicity, with folks from the black community and the South Asian community being the victims of those crimes most often. Twenty-eight per cent were based in religion, and the members of the Jewish community were most prominently affected in that case. Sixteen per cent were hate crimes based on sexual orientation.

Of all of the hate crimes, those based on sexual orientation were by far the most violent. Seventy-five per cent of hate crimes based on sexual orientation that Statistics Canada looked at in that survey were violent crimes, as compared to 38% of hate crimes based on race being violent and 25% of those based on religion being violent.

It was a very serious situation that was being described. We know that many hate crimes also go unreported in Canada, unfortunately, because of the extra issues involved. There may be a violent assault but there is also this extra component of someone being targeted because of his or her membership in a minority group or in a minority, and the extra problems that causes and the extra emotional content of that kind of attack.

It is troubling to see these increases, troubling to see the level of violence associated with them and it is something that we need to be addressing in our society as a whole.

The first question I put back in June to the minister was what the government was planning to do to increase the confidence of victims of hate crimes in the police and in the criminal justice system so that the reporting of these crimes might be increased. The minister, in his response, said something about the Canadian Human Rights Commission looking into this issue and then went on to talk about other issues.

I believe the Canadian Human Rights Commission is looking at the whole question of hate speech but it is a different issue than the kind of extra component of a criminal act, especially for assault where there is someone being targeted because of his or her membership in a minority organization.

The second question was around specifically the gay and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and transsexual community and the fact that the violence of those hate-based crimes was rising faster. I asked what the government might do to address that, what education programs might be in the works and what data there was. We know that hate crimes data, especially related to the GLBTT community, is very inconsistent and that the statistics are very inconsistent across the country. Therefore, I was asking what the government would do to address those issues. The minister did not address that question at all. In fact, he went off on a completely different tangent on something else.

The issue is still there. What is the government prepared to do to address the violent hate crimes that face the GLBTT community in Canada? What is it prepared to do in terms of ensuring that there is consistency in how our police report and record hate crimes? Those questions still need to be answered.

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• (1820)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Petit (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in Canada and elsewhere in the world, hate crimes are viewed as a serious social problem. It is felt that these crimes are different from other ones, because they can have a profound impact not only on victims, but also on the respective communities and on society.

The Criminal Code includes four offences that are considered to be hate crimes: advocating genocide, inciting public hatred, wilfully promoting hatred and mischief against religious property. Other offences, such as assault or threats, can also be considered hate crimes if it is determined that they were triggered by prejudice against an identifiable group. Hate crimes can target race, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, or any other similar factor. The sentencing provisions provide heavier sentences for these types of offences.

The most recent accurate data available in Canada were collected through a project led by Statistics Canada's Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. These data were recently published in a report entitled "Police-reported hate Crime in Canada, 2008". According to this report, Canadian police services identified 1,036 hate-motivated crimes, up from 765 in 2007. This represents a 35% increase in the number of such offences. Part of the increase may be due to heightened public awareness of these types of incidents as well as improved reporting practices by police.

The report also points out that the vast majority of police-reported hate crimes resulted from one of three primary motivations: race or ethnicity, 55%; religion, 26%; and sexual orientation, 16%.

Increases were reported in 2008 for all three types of motivation. It is very surprising to note that the largest increase was reported for hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation, which more than doubled from 2007 to 2008.

Hate crimes motivated by religion increased by 53%, while those motivated by race or ethnicity increased by a lesser amount, that is 15%.

There were 205 hate crimes against Blacks in 2008, accounting for almost 4 in 10 racially-motivated incidents. This number was 30% higher than in 2007 but still lower than the number reported in 2006.

Anti-Semitic hate crimes accounted for nearly two-thirds of religiously-motivated incidents in 2008. Police reported 165 hate crimes against the Jewish faith, an increase of 42% from 2007.

Together, about 4 in 10 hate crimes in 2008 were reported by police in Toronto and Vancouver. After accounting for population differences, rates were higher in the smaller census metropolitan areas of London, Guelph, Kingston and Brantford followed by the larger areas of Vancouver, Hamilton and Kitchener.

About 6 in 10 persons accused of hate crime in 2008 were youth and young adults aged 12 to 22 years, higher than the proportion accused of crime in general. The number of persons accused of hate crime peaked among 17 and 18 year-olds.

We are aware of the serious impact of crimes against lesbians, homosexuals, bisexuals and transgenders. According to the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, the majority of hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation are violent.

Detailed information—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas.

• (1825)

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Siksay: Mr. Speaker, while I appreciate hearing from the parliamentary secretary the statistics and the analysis, it would be nice to know what the government was prepared to do. Maybe he could get to that.

There are a number of things we could be doing. We should ensure that we collect the right statistics and that we have consistency so that all of our police forces are doing the same kind of reporting with the same understanding. If we have good statistics, we can understand what is going on and make good policy and determine the effectiveness of policy.

We also have to make sure that the police, prosecutors, and judges understand the sentencing provisions of the Criminal Code and understand its usefulness in dealing with the whole question of hate crimes. This is a sentencing tool that is available to them in the criminal justice system and can be used effectively.

We need to make the sentencing provisions more explicit, especially around transgender and transsexual Canadians so that they are explicitly included in this law and have this recourse.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Petit: Mr. Speaker, I will continue with my speech. As we have already mentioned, the data collected by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics have shown that the vast majority of police-reported hate crimes were motivated by three main factors: race or ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation. It is extremely disturbing that the largest increase was among hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation, which more than doubled from 2007 to 2008.

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We are very aware of the extremely serious consequences of crimes against homosexual, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered individuals. With respect to the community's ability to take steps against hate crimes, it should be noted that resources are available from the Department of Justice through its justice partnership and innovation program. The Department of Justice website provides the following funding information on its programs branch page:

Access to Justice for Marginalized Populations

The Department of Justice is committed to supporting the Minister of Justice in working to ensure that Canada is a just and law-abiding society with an accessible, efficient and fair system of justice.

G8 AND G20 SUMMITS

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on June 16, the Liberals presented pictures which showed to what extent the Minister of Industry and member for Parry Sound—Muskoka used the G8 infrastructure fund to shamelessly favour his riding. Indeed, the minister took money from that fund for his own slush fund and used it for his riding. The photos showed 10 projects for which the money had been used, including: a \$2 million project to upgrade streets and improve parks in Port Severn, which is located 135 kilometres from the G8; a \$500,000 project to improve a park in Bracebridge, which is about 50 kilometres from where the meeting took place; and a \$730,000 project to upgrade and repair a road in Kearney, 42 kilometres from the summit.

These bridge and road upgrades were not even done, even though they were announced with great pomp the previous year, in press releases.

Other ridings have much more urgent needs than the minister's riding, and they want to have access to government programs. I am thinking in particular of all the regions that are dependent on the forestry and manufacturing industries.

The minister funnelled into his own riding the largest amount given to northern Ontario ridings for infrastructure projects. His riding received a total of \$35.8 million from the building Canada fund, the recreational infrastructure Canada initiative, and the infrastructure stimulus fund. The minister also funnelled the largest amount of money given under the community adjustment fund to northern Ontario ridings. This \$7.5 million is more than twice the average amount of \$3.1 million given to northern Ontario ridings. As the Minister of Industry and member of Parry Sound—Muskoka, he is responsible for most of these programs. This is shameful and scandalous.

Even after the G8 summit, patronage money continued to flow into the riding of the Minister of Industry. Pictures taken after the G8 prove that Huntsville, which is located in his riding, benefited from money disguised as infrastructure money that was supposedly provided for the G8 summit. The Prime Minister must explain to Canadians why these so-called infrastructure projects were still not completed when the summit took place.

The Liberal Party leader said Canadians had had enough of the Conservatives' favouritism and the Prime Minister's poor budget management. The Conservative Prime Minister even approved of the wasting of billions of dollars. But that is not all. The Conservatives want to give billions of dollars in tax cuts to big, profitable

corporations, even though the corporate tax rate in Canada is already one of the lowest in the G7.

The Conservatives' priorities are not aligned with the needs of Canadian families, which are having trouble making ends meet. The Conservatives have three basic priorities: prisons, fighter aircraft, and a \$20 billion gift for big corporations in the form of tax cuts.

When will the Minister of Industry really start being accountable to the Canadian people?

• (1830)

[English]

Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to respond to that question.

The Government of Canada has been clear all along that its investments in projects through the G8 legacy fund were intended to showcase the communities in the region and to provide a legacy to the area for hosting the G8 summit.

The town of Huntsville received funding to expand and rehabilitate its community centre in order that the facility could be used as the G8 administrative centre. The Muskoka Tourism Visitor Information Centre was also rehabilitated.

Over 10,000 reporters attended this event, not 10,000 reporters from Ottawa, not 10,000 reporters from Canada, nor even from North America, but 10,000 reporters from around the world. We were showcasing Canada to the world at this particular event and it was important that the world see Canada in its best light. We believe we accomplished that.

We rehabilitated and renovated some of those facilities so that tourists in particular would be more easily informed of all that the Muskoka region has to offer visitors.

Additional projects were also undertaken throughout the region, including improvements to parks and public spaces, in order to better showcase one of the most beautiful places in all of Canada, with the exception of course of my own beautiful riding of Fort McMurray—Athabasca in northern Alberta.

As my colleague said before and I will say again, the Allister Johnston Bridge previously referred to by the member is not a project being funded through the G8 legacy fund. The span of the street that was rehabilitated through this Government of Canada investment began at the base of the bridge and spanned the length of the main street.

The G8 summit brought together in Canada people from the world's leading economic powers: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States. This was the first visit to the region for many of the delegates. The G8 legacy fund's investments helped to showcase the local area to delegates and invested significantly in the region's tourism industry.

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The member suggested that there was favouritism. I do not buy that at all. He is mistaken. Every day when I am in this place and away from my home in northern Alberta I travel across the Alexandra Bridge. For the past year it has been undergoing major renovations paid for by the federal government's infrastructure fund. On one side of the bridge is a Liberal riding, that member's riding, and on the other side of the bridge is another Liberal member's riding. If there is favouritism, I would suggest that the member should speak up and tell the facts to the Canadian people. The facts are that we have been fair, we have been just, and we have treated all Canadians equally because we are interested in all Canadians' quality of life.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Mr. Speaker, the example my colleague just gave does not hold water because the Alexandra bridge he talked about belongs to the Government of Canada. What is being done on the bridge is strictly maintenance. That cannot be compared to the favouritism seen elsewhere.

Even though the G8 and G20 summits are important, the ones held in Canada last June left a bitter taste in the mouth. They seem to have been improvised and poorly planned and were terribly expensive. The Prime Minister actually missed a golden opportunity for Canada to make its mark in the world.

In addition to wasting money, Canada failed to benefit from these summits. For the first time in the history of the UN, Canada could not even win a sit on the Security Council.

Canadians did not ask the Conservatives to run up a budget deficit of \$54 billion or more, spend \$16 billion on possibly unnecessary

fighter aircraft without a call for tenders, and waste \$1 billion on a meeting of the G8 and G20 that lasted 72 hours.

How much of this mess—

The Deputy Speaker: The honourable parliamentary secretary.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member and I am sorry, but I still do not buy it.

Today we heard from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. We heard from people in Quebec who deal with municipalities. They are ecstatic about the amount of infrastructure in which this government has invested throughout Canada. One billion dollars in stimulus money in Quebec alone has helped it put in new water pipes, new sewer systems, new roads and bridges.

I thank the member for supporting us in that. I wish the Bloc and the NDP had supported Canada's economic action plan. Fortunately, this Conservative government continues to make good investments across this country. We are going past political lines. We are getting the best job done for Canadians and their quality of life.

● (1835)

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:36 p.m.)

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