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(HANSARD)

**Wednesday, February 16, 1994**

**Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent**

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, February 16, 1994

The House met at 2 p.m.

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*Prayers*

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

### TAXATION

**Mr. Paul Zed (Fundy—Royal):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to address the issue of suggested changes to the registered retirement savings plan and possible new taxes on employee benefit plans.

I have received numerous letters and inquiries from constituents in New Brunswick who are concerned about any reduction in the amount of allowable contributions to their RRSPs. These concerns are from small business owners and professionals who rely on their RRSPs as they do not enjoy the luxury of large corporate retirement savings plans.

To reduce or alter this plan would be a serious blow to these Canadians who are already enduring difficult economic conditions. The government must send a signal that it is prepared to help small business owners and other self-employed Canadians to prepare for their retirements.

By maintaining the amount Canadians are allowed to contribute to their RRSPs the government will ensure these Canadians have the opportunity to save adequately for their retirements. This is especially important at a time when the Canada pension program is under increasing strain.

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[*Translation*]

### WINTER OLYMPICS

**Mr. Laurent Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Jean-Luc Brassard from my riding on his brilliant victory this morning in the free-style skiing finals at the Lillehammer Olympic Games. Mr. Brassard won the first Canadian gold medal. That is a glorious event for this young Quebecer who, on many occasions, has been an honour to Quebec and to Canada in several international com-

petitions. The people of Beauharnois—Salaberry are very proud of the outstanding performances of this talented athlete. His spirit and his determination will continue to inspire all young Quebec and Canadian athletes.

On behalf of my constituents and on behalf of Quebec and Canada, I would like to reiterate my most sincere congratulations to Jean-Luc and wish him good luck for the rest of his stay at the Olympic village.

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[*English*]

### TAXATION

**Mr. Paul E. Forseth (New Westminster—Burnaby):** Mr. Speaker, when governments propose to eliminate tax loopholes they talk about soaking the rich. When the so-called loopholes are then closed it is more likely the not so rich get the bite.

The finance minister wants to make the tax system more equitable. Advice from his people says abolish deductions for the business lunch. It might take money from modestly paid travelling salesmen while devastating the often marginalized food service industry.

Lowering the cap on RRSPs might deprive rich people of some tax savings, but it would hit hard the lower and middle class self-employed who have no company pension or union contract plan.

Government bureaucrats can identify some loopholes, but before they get too enthusiastic they should take a good look at who exactly gets bitten.

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### GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

**Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan (York—Simcoe):** Mr. Speaker, last week I met with a group of individuals in Newmarket in my riding of York—Simcoe. These individuals represent a diverse economic and community interest and various political ideologies in all parts of the riding. They express different concerns and solutions to the financial and economic challenges we face as a nation.

However, in spite of this they successfully reached a consensus. This group of individuals concluded that Canadians are willing to pay taxes for services which are delivered in an effective and efficient way. They want value for their dollar.

*S. O. 31*

I urge the government, in its ambitious agenda for review and renewal, to assess the cost effectiveness of all programs and services the government delivers. It is imperative now more than ever to assure Canadians that their hard earned tax dollars are being spent wisely.

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#### HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Middlesex):** Mr. Speaker, it is essential that the Canadian government continue to call for the Mexican government to guarantee respect for human rights of all its citizens, in particular for the people who were brutally mistreated in the recent uprising in the Chiapas region.

(1405)

The constituents of London—Middlesex were gravely concerned with reports of torture and summary executions of guerrilla combatants by government troops, and they condemn the indiscriminate bombing by the military.

I join with my constituents in urging the Canadian government to call on the Mexican government to respect the presence of human rights organizations, to allow the bishops of the area to mediate in the conflict and to act on the natives' call for land reform.

Canada has a responsibility to ensure that the human rights of the citizens of our new trading partner are respected. This can only be guaranteed through continued monitoring by the international community.

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#### CRIMINAL CODE

**Ms. Roseanne Skoke (Central Nova):** Mr. Speaker, life begins at the moment of conception and continues until natural death.

Respect for life and the dignity of human suffering together with the recognition of the moral, ethical and spiritual values is well founded in both natural law and Canadian law.

The Criminal Code of Canada forbids aiding, counselling or assisting suicide. This law does not merely exist to regulate our behaviour. Rather, it articulates and symbolizes our values and beliefs as a nation.

In recognition of all the heroic individuals who silently suffer the physical pain and endure the emotional torments of this life from day unto day until natural death, I demand that the existing laws of the Criminal Code respecting assisted suicide be strictly enforced to ensure that our nation's values and moral conscience with respect to life not be fettered, for not to do so will create a greater injustice to mankind than any human pain or suffering could possibly inflict.

[*Translation*]

#### WINTER OLYMPICS

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères):** Mr. Speaker, it is with pride and great pleasure that I rise today in this House on my own behalf and on behalf of my colleague from Saint-Jean to stress the dazzling performance by skaters Isabelle Brasseur and Lloyd Eisler who won the bronze medal in the pairs figure skating category yesterday at the Lillehammer Olympic Games.

Isabelle Brasseur and Lloyd Eisler were bronze medallists at the Albertville Olympic Games, have been the Canadian champions for several years and hold the world champions title. Their impressive record is due to their exceptionally hard work and determination.

After giving this wonderful performance and winning this beautiful medal, Isabelle Brasseur and Lloyd Eisler are now putting an end to their successful career at the amateur level. These two champions, who train at the Haute Performance Centre in Boucherville, will now enter a professional career that promises to be as successful.

To these two champions who thrilled Quebec and Canada and who so often filled us with pride, and earned our admiration, I say congratulations and good luck on behalf of Quebec and Canada.

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[*English*]

#### WINTER OLYMPICS

**Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of Cariboo—Chilcotin I would like to congratulate the athletes representing Canada at the winter Olympics at Lillehammer, Norway and wish them great success.

It is unfortunate, however, that a world class athlete from Quesnel, British Columbia, was not given the opportunity to participate in this prestigious sporting event because of a tough new qualification policy.

Tony Fiala has dedicated his whole life to preparing for competition. In the 1991–92 season he scored first overall in Canada and second overall in the North American biathlon. Canada's qualifications standards are not based on an overall record which would place him at the top but by a two occasion showing with a standard much higher than that required by most other countries fielding competitors.

Tony Fiala may not be winning any medals at Lillehammer, Norway, but to the people of Quesnel and throughout British Columbia, Tony Fiala is a winner all the way.

**WINTER OLYMPICS**

**Ms. Albina Guarnieri (Mississauga East):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance may well have to revise his budget forecast to take account of the bounty of precious metals that Canadians are bringing home from Norway.

Isabelle Brasseur and Lloyd Eisler turned in an astounding performance in pairs figure skating last night to earn a bronze medal for Canada.

[Translation]

First to “break the ice”, these two young athletes have put on a performance worthy of the greatest skaters of our times. They displayed an exemplary calm and a strong determination. Isabelle and Lloyd deserve our recognition and our admiration.

This morning, Canadians had another reason to be proud. Jean-Luc Brassard, from Grande-Île, Quebec, took the honours, winning for Canada the gold medal in the free-style moguls competition. The Canadian team had much hope for this young 21 year-old athlete. He took up the challenge with unrivalled talent and command.

(1410)

[English]

I join the Minister of Canadian Heritage and all Canadians in congratulating the latest crop of Canadian Olympic medal winners.

\* \* \*

**THE ECONOMY**

**Mr. John Loney (Edmonton North):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to bring to the attention of the House that the composite leading index rose by .08 in January, matching its revised growth rate for December. It is noteworthy that these gains are the highest since the index began its recovery in 1991.

An upward trend in the index points to better economic times ahead. Most economists expect stronger growth in 1994.

Statistics Canada reported that the leading indicator is heading in the right direction. The acceleration in recent months has been the result principally of a continental upturn and the buoyancy in the stock markets.

Manufacturing demands have been steady. New orders recorded a third straight increase despite the effect of temporary plant closings in the auto industry. At the same time, shipments to stocks ratio continue to improve, rising to the highest level since the data series began in early 1952.

The stockmarket soared to new all time records in January, accelerating from 1.6 per cent growth to 2.1 per cent growth at a time of falling interest rates.

*S. O. 31*

[Translation]

**CANADA POST CORPORATION**

**Mr. Guy H. Arseneault (Restigouche—Chaleur):** Mr. Speaker, over the last years, Canadians living in rural areas have been badly hurt by the closure or the reduction in services of thousands of rural post offices.

When he took office, the minister declared a moratorium which has been extended and is still in force.

[English]

The closures of rural post offices were a blatant attack on rural Canada. I would like to congratulate the minister for the leadership he has shown on the issue. This moratorium is an important first step.

[Translation]

I urge the minister to direct Canada Post Corporation to immediately drop its policy with respect to the closure of rural post offices. It is time to rectify that flagrant mistake for the sake of the rural areas of our country.

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**REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Mr. Bernard Deshaies (Abitibi):** Mr. Speaker, regional economic recovery is an absolute priority for all Quebecers and Canadians.

I would like to mention two cases in my region of Abitibi, where companies are acting responsibly in this regard. They are Forpan and Agnico Eagle, in Val-d'Or. Forpan will invest \$8.3 million to increase the capacity of its particle board plant by 25 per cent. Through this investment, the company will increase its competitiveness on the international market and preserve jobs in the region.

Agnico Eagle will invest \$13 million and provide jobs for some 40 workers during the next two years in mining exploration.

These are two concrete examples of economic recovery activities undertaken by energetic entrepreneurs capitalizing on the region's potential.

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[English]

**REGISTERED RETIREMENT SAVINGS PLANS**

**Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod):** Mr. Speaker, our nation was founded and has prospered on such principles as hard work and self-reliance. Traditionally we have rewarded men and women who start and maintain small businesses by their sweat and sacrifice.

Now our finance minister awash in debt from years of government overspending is talking of removing another small business privilege, the ability to put aside one's own resources to finance one's retirement.

*Oral Questions*

Through such policies this government is not only encouraging but forcing citizens in Canada to be dependent on government handouts. RRSPs allow private citizens to plan for their own retirements without government aid. That is how Canada can continue to prosper.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**BILINGUALISM**

**Mr. Eugène Bellemare (Carleton—Gloucester):** Mr. Speaker, the members of the Reform Party seem to take great pleasure in tabling petitions asking for a national referendum on bilingualism.

When he tabled his petition the other day, an hon. member of that party declared that the official language policy is creating dissension. Another member of the same party maintained that there was too much French in the national capital. He added that everything would go faster in Parliament if less French were spoken.

We now have two separatist political parties in the House: one that wants territorial separation; the other that wants language separation. Both go against the Constitution and against Canadian unity.

\* \* \*

(1415)

[English]

**LITERACY**

**Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph—Wellington):** Mr. Speaker, illiteracy is an everyday reality for many Canadians. It is estimated that one in four Canadians has little or no literacy skills.

I am pleased that Guelph—Wellington has several groups committed to ending illiteracy.

Illiteracy crosses all income brackets and costs an estimated \$14 billion annually, both directly and indirectly. We know that job creation is the key to our economic renewal. However, with little or no literacy skills the task of retraining for some will be impossible.

More important, the social and economic ramifications of this silent disability are tremendous and the amount of lost potential is staggering.

I urge this government to continue to make literacy a priority. We must help illiterate Canadians acquire the skills to ensure that they will become the best that they can be. We need to make literacy a fundamental right for all Canadians.

**The Speaker:** My colleagues, I would draw your attention to the clock. It is now 2.14 p.m. and we have all of the statements in. I think that is a good practice and I want to thank all hon. members who were kind enough to give their statements to the interpreters. It does help a great deal and I want to thank them for that.

**ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

[Translation]

**ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE**

**Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. Yesterday, the Solicitor General had to admit there were links between organized crime and cigarette smuggling networks, in connection with weapons and drug trafficking operations on Mohawk reserves.

He also contradicted himself by first admitting that certain people had cancelled RCMP anti-drug operations and then claiming there were no no go zones for the police in Canadian territory.

How can the Prime Minister insist that the law is enforced evenhandedly across Canada when yesterday Mr. Claude Lesard, the RCMP spokesman in Quebec, stated that the RCMP was not on the reserves, despite the fact that the reserves are said to play a major role in illegal trafficking in alcohol, drugs and cigarettes?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, about the police presence on the reserves: there are three police forces. There is the Mohawk police force which is locally recognized and controlled by the aboriginal authorities. There is the provincial police, which has jurisdiction because it was given the former powers of the RCMP and which must do its job there as it does elsewhere. The third one is the federal police which is concerned with smuggling. The federal police is doing its job at this very moment.

According to our information, cigarette smuggling in Quebec has decreased considerably. If we can break up the cigarette smuggling networks, we can break up the others as well. I am convinced the police are doing a good job. We have always told the police they can go anywhere across Canada to do their job.

**Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, the government keeps changing its story. For a long time the government said, as it just said today through the Prime Minister, that the law is enforced everywhere, that the RCMP goes everywhere in Canada and that those are the government's instructions.

Yesterday, however, the Prime Minister used the word "hesitations", when he said he had never heard there were no go zones until it was said the police had some hesitations.

I want to ask the Prime Minister to explain what kind of hesitations he was referring to. Are these hesitations caused by the government's lack of political will?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, this nation has been facing this problem of contraband for the past four years. The member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell was asking questions here in the House when the Leader of the Opposition was with the government and nothing was being done. When I asked for a report on that, it said that there was some hesitation. I said there should be no hesitation. I said to the RCMP: “You do your job everywhere in Canada”, and that is exactly what they are doing today.

(1420)

**Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker I would like to ask the Prime Minister to tell us whether or not he confirms the allegation expressed yesterday by Chief Jerry Peltier according to which the government is on the brink of launching a massive major operation in Kanesatake.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister):** The answer, Mr. Speaker, is no.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval):** Mr. Speaker, with his retirement only a few days away, the commanding officer of the RCMP in Quebec had the following comments to make and I quote: “We did not want to create social chaos over a few cartons of cigarettes, but the negotiations never amounted to anything and smuggling increased without anyone taking action.”

My question to the Prime Minister is as follows: How can he reconcile the comments of the commanding officer of the RCMP in Quebec with his own statements, when he asked us to name names, ostensibly because the RCMP did not have enough evidence to intervene?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I have nothing further to add. We delivered a very clear statement in the House last Tuesday. The police are doing their job and cigarette smuggling networks in Canada are in the process of disappearing.

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval):** Mr. Speaker, for over a month now, the Prime Minister has been telling this House that the RCMP can enforce the law anywhere in Canada, that there are no “no go” zones and that the law applies equally to everyone.

What is the Prime Minister’s reaction to comments by the commanding officer of the RCMP in Quebec to the effect that politicians, out of fear, never succeeded in negotiating with the natives on this issue and as a result, cigarette smuggling spread throughout the reserves?

*[English]*

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should realize that for the last three months the country has had a new government. He is talking about when his colleague was a member of the previous administration.

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**THE BUDGET**

**Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

The government said previously said that its target for deficit reduction is to get the deficit to 3 per cent of GDP or down to about \$23 billion for 1996–97.

Is this still the government’s deficit target, the target that Canadians should have in mind when they read the deficit figures in the budget next week?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, that is what was written in the red book, so that will be the target.

**Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest):** Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Prime Minister.

The government has implied that it wants to broaden the tax base to achieve greater equity but not to increase the total tax burden on Canadians. Is this still the primary objective of the government’s tax policy, the objective that Canadians should have in mind when they analyse the tax changes in the budget next week?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I am wondering what kind of question the hon. member will have next week.

We will have the budget next Tuesday and he will have all these answers.

**Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest):** Mr. Speaker, my question was whether or not that was still the objective. My second supplementary question is for the Prime Minister.

The government has stated time and time again that job creation is its highest priority and that its economic policies should be judged first and foremost on their impact on jobs.

Is this still the government’s highest priority, the one that Canadians should have in mind when they analyse the job impact of the budget next week?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, we started before the budget when we put in place the infrastructure program that was to create jobs. There are other programs of the same nature in the red book.

If the hon. member wants to know what our objectives are, he should read the red book again.

*Oral Questions*

(1425)

*[Translation]***ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE**

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean):** Mr. Speaker, the people of the entire Mohawk territory are being terrorized by a few armed offenders. The *Globe and Mail* reported today that Chief Debbie Thomas from the Akwesasne Reserve had repeatedly asked the federal government to hold an inquiry into the violent or unexplained death of 75 people since 1979, and all these facts were corroborated by the Mohawk Police Chief, Mr. Brian David.

Does the Solicitor General not agree that it is high time that the RCMP answer the call of citizens terrorized by a handful of dangerous criminals?

*[English]*

**Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada):** Mr. Speaker, the crimes that the hon. member is talking about are matters coming under the Criminal Code which is enforced by the police of local jurisdiction.

In this case, as the article points out, it is the Mohawk police supported by the Ontario Provincial Police. The mounted police will be happy to give them assistance but it is the primary responsibility of the local Mohawk police and the Ontario Provincial Police.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean):** Mr. Speaker, in view of how widespread the problem is on Mohawk territory, can the Solicitor General tell us if he has specifically instructed the RCMP to work closely with the Mohawk police to put an end to violence on these territories?

*[English]*

**Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada):** Mr. Speaker, I have already explained that the crimes of violence the hon. member is talking about are matters coming under the jurisdiction of the Mohawk police and the Ontario Provincial Police.

If the member had looked into the matter further he would have realized there has been a joint strike force involving the mounted police, the Ontario Provincial Police and other local police forces working in the area for several months. I wish he would recognize that before jumping to wrong conclusions from reading that newspaper article.

**THE BUDGET**

**Mr. John Williams (St. Albert):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Yesterday the Liberal premier of New Brunswick committed his government to a balanced budget, an achievement unheard of in federal Liberal circles.

Will the Prime Minister take a lesson from his Liberal colleague in New Brunswick and finally commit this government to achieving a balanced budget by the end of this Parliament?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, we have to understand that New Brunswick has had the privilege of having six years of good Liberal government.

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

**Mr. John Williams (St. Albert):** I think, Mr. Speaker, that was an item for debate, not an answer to the question.

**The Speaker:** Order. It is not that I disagree at all, but I wonder if the member would put his question.

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Prime Minister.

If the Prime Minister is going to achieve a balanced budget eventually, and the red book states that the government will do it in three years which will require an \$8 billion a year reduction, will we see that in the budget coming down next week?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should read the red book again. His leader referred accurately to the fact that we said we had a goal to reduce the deficit to 3 per cent of GNP at the end of the third year of our mandate. We never said a balanced budget.

If the member wanted a balanced budget, it would have been better for him to have voted for the provincial Liberal Party in Alberta in the last election.

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*[Translation]***WAR IN BOSNIA**

**Mr. Jean-Marc Jacob (Charlesbourg):** Mr. Speaker, we heard this morning that the ceasefire declared in Sarajevo is in big trouble. According to some sources, the Bosnian Serbs have refused to withdraw their heavy artillery aimed at the Bosnian capital.

My question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs: Can the minister tell us whether it is true that the Bosnian Serbs are refusing to withdraw their heavy artillery from around Sarajevo just a few days before the deadline set by NATO?

(1430)

**Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the hon. member that NATO's proposals will be carried out. There is, of course, some resistance from soldiers unwilling to follow the directives of political representatives, but the Serb, Muslim and Croatian authorities have assured us of the desire to reach a negotiated peace. We hope that political will prevail over the stubbornness of a few soldiers in the field.

**Mr. Jean-Marc Jacob (Charlesbourg):** Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the minister of defence promised on January 13, Canadian peacekeepers in Srebrenica have not been relieved within the 30-day deadline. Are we to understand that they will not be relieved by Dutch troops before the deadline set by NATO?

**Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I want to assure this House that the procedures put in place to allow Dutch troops to relieve Canadian peacekeepers are moving slowly but surely. Over 15 Dutch soldiers and representatives are already in Srebrenica. The military equipment needed by the troops is already in Split and we think that, in the next few days or weeks, the troops will be relieved as agreed between the parties.

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[English]

#### PHYSICIAN ASSISTED SUICIDE

**Mrs. Daphne Jennings (Mission—Coquitlam):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Yesterday the Prime Minister confirmed he would allow a free vote in this House on the issue of physician assisted suicide.

Does the Prime Minister mean by a free vote that a member of this House has the freedom to vote according to the member's wishes or beliefs, or that the member will vote according to the wishes of the member's constituents?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, in the House of Commons there is only one vote, that of the member. The member will vote according to his or her conscience. That is all.

**Mrs. Daphne Jennings (Mission—Coquitlam):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Prime Minister for his answer. However, it does not satisfy me.

Euthanasia was not an issue in the election last fall. Yesterday the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell told Radio Canada that he will vote his own belief on this issue rather than those of his constituents.

#### Oral Questions

Will the Prime Minister allow all Canadians to freely vote their own beliefs on this deeply personal issue at the next election in a national referendum?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, we were elected to use our best judgment. On a couple of occasions, when I voted on abortion and on capital punishment, I knew I was voting according to my own judgment and it was not very popular in my riding.

We are elected and as members of Parliament we have the privilege to attend committees to discuss matters freely. We then make up our own minds and the people can replace us at election time.

This notion that we should be replaced by polling is revolting to me. We are elected to use our best judgment. If the member thinks she cannot do that, be recalled.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### SOCIAL AND CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING

**Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides):** Mr. Speaker, on May 5, 1993, the present Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was then in the opposition, stated that the government was violating the basic right of the people to adequate and decent housing and demanded that it "act as soon as possible to save the social housing and co-operative housing program in Canada".

(1435)

Can the member, now Minister of Foreign Affairs, tell us whether he has acted as strongly as he was advocating less than a year ago and approached his colleague, the Minister of Finance, to that effect?

[English]

**Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether the question is appropriate because the subject matter will be dealt with later in the day as an opposition motion.

I wish to inform the hon. member that all my colleagues on this side of the House have immense interest in the subject matter of social housing. We have been working diligently with the Minister of Finance, as we have been working with other levels of governments, both provincial and municipal, to determine new ways of finding additional moneys in order to address the serious problem of social housing.

[Translation]

**The Speaker:** I must tell the hon. member, before she asks her next question, that I allowed the minister to answer the question, even though we are going to have a debate on this this afternoon. Your supplementary, please.

**Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides):** Mr. Speaker, before the budget preparation is over, can the Minister of Public Works



*Oral Questions*

assure us that he will address the concerns of 1.2 million low income Canadian tenants who are in urgent need of affordable and adequate housing?

[English]

**Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency):** Mr. Speaker, the only assurance I can give the hon. member is one of honesty.

The honest assessment of the housing situation is such that we will have to work within the fiscal means of the Government of Canada, just like in the province of Quebec, just like in the province of Ontario, and just like in the province of British Columbia. All governments are wrestling with the issues of social housing.

We are working co-operatively in the federation to try to find additional moneys in co-operation with the Minister of Finance in order to address some of those serious issues which not only affect residents in the province of Quebec, but right across this country.

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**TOBACCO**

**Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

The key to a successful anti-smoking education campaign will be a blueprint developed by the government in partnership with the health community.

What steps will the minister take to ensure that a nation-wide network of health volunteers, professionals and organizations are actively utilized in the design, implementation and monitoring of such a campaign? What new regulatory framework does the minister envision to give the Government of Canada greater control over cigarette manufacturers and thereby safeguard the health of Canadians at all times?

**Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, we tabled a four point plan to combat smuggling. Part of that was a very extensive program to counter smoking especially among young people or populations at risk.

One of the things that happened immediately on the day we announced this four point plan was the proclamation of the act which prohibits the sale of tobacco to young people. This week we have been circulating regulations in order that all vendors and all places where vending machines are in place are advised of the requirements of the act.

We will continue to work diligently at preparing the kind of legislation and regulations that will go a long way in preventing young people from taking up this habit which is terribly bad for their health.

**TAXATION**

**Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue.

As the minister knows, international companies with subsidiaries in Canada establish prices for transferring goods and services between them. This is known as transfer pricing. Although the finance department is attempting to clarify the rules for establishing these prices there is still the question of tax fairness as profits can be internally adjusted.

This government says it is concerned about increasing its revenues. In order to create more equity in the tax system would the minister commit to investigating tax losses from transfer pricing and report to the House his plan to access that lost revenue?

(1440)

**Hon. David Anderson (Minister of National Revenue):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question. Aspects of tax revenue and what we receive are under constant and careful monitoring by my department and of course by officials of the Department of Finance.

I would like to inform the hon. member that we are pleased she has come forward in this House to point out there may be tax inequities which my colleague the Minister of Finance will address next week in the budget.

**Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast):** Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. By issuing a press release on January 7 urging Canadian taxpayers and companies to encourage compatible transfer pricing methods, the government recognizes there is a problem.

Will the minister commit to developing legislation for transfer pricing to ensure these corporations pay their fair share of taxes?

**Hon. David Anderson (Minister of National Revenue):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member, her party and all other parties in the House can be assured that is an objective, to ensure there is fairness not only in this particular area of taxation but in others.

I will give a little more information on this. There are differing theories of how to tax international corporations and at what point. We do have some differences with the Americans in this regard. It is a matter not only for my department and the Department of Finance to work on, but also for other colleagues to deal with the Americans and other countries to make sure we establish a system which is not only fair from a national point of view but is also workable in international economic affairs.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

(1445)

**BREAST IMPLANTS**

**Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. We have learned that the American companies responsible for the problems caused by breast implants are about to pay an amount of \$4.75 billion 97 per cent of which will go to American women who represent only 50 per cent of the victims. All other victims, Canadians included, will have to make do with whatever is left.

Could the Minister of Health tell us if she took all necessary measures so that Canadian women have their say in this decision which will concern them most directly?

**Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, we are following this very closely. We would like to stress the fact that Canadian women interested in this issue can receive all the information they need simply by contacting the Department of Health.

**Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond):** Mr. Speaker, since the minister seems so sure of herself, can she explain why Mark Steven, a lawyer representing an important women's group, declared that women in Canada were being swindled?

**Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, we all have a right to our own opinions and I do not want to comment on what others might think. I can only assure you that this question is of utmost importance for us. Personally, the health of Canadian women is one of my priorities, it is an issue close to my heart. I will make sure my department does everything in its power so that Canadian women are treated fairly.

\* \* \*

[English]

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

The Canadian Federation of Municipalities represents an important level of government and is especially sensitive to local concerns. The federation recently recommended to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples that municipalities must be a party to the negotiations of land claims and aboriginal self-government.

Will the minister assure the House that local governments will be invited to participate in future negotiations?

**Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** As a point of law, Mr. Speaker, local municipalities are creatures of the province. However, in the spirit of these negotiations, because municipalities are concerned about zoning where they abut aboriginal lands and economic development where it affects both the municipalities and the First Nations, I put forward, as a statement not as a policy, that where possible municipalities should be invited in an open and transparent mode so they will know exactly what is happening, and they will know exactly where they fit into the mosaic. Generally this has been accepted by many of the mayors I have talked to across the country.

**Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for his answer. I would ask him to insist that Stewart, B.C. be brought into the negotiations in northwestern British Columbia.

**Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** Again, Mr. Speaker, although I do not like the term because I was once a mayor, municipalities are creatures of the provinces, the direct jurisdiction between the province and the municipality.

Any municipality that is interested is invited to listen and to participate from Yukon down through B.C. As a matter of fact I was talking to a B.C. mayor last night as a result of a suggestion from one of the Reform members. I think the system will work. It has to work because we have no other options.

\* \* \*

**CFB MOOSE JAW**

**Mrs. Georgette Sheridan (Saskatoon—Humboldt):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence.

Canadians will remember that in the red book the Liberal Party, now the government, made a commitment to reduce defence spending. This will have an impact on Canadian forces bases and the surrounding communities across the country.

As an MP from Saskatchewan, I am deeply concerned about the future of our bases, particularly our primary base, CFB Moose Jaw, wing 15.

Could the minister inform the House what progress has been made toward achieving fiscal responsibility and efficiency in the area of defence?

**Hon. David Michael Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question. I know she is greatly concerned about the future of CFB Moose Jaw.

*Oral Questions*

I have answered the general question many times and I think she has a good understanding of the problems the government is confronted with in dealing with its deficit and in trying to get military spending rationalized.

I cannot give her any assurances today except to say that I am very much aware of the regional problems that may be caused as a result of the closure of any one facility. I am mindful of the difficult situation Saskatchewan has found itself in.

Beyond that the member and the other members of the House will just have to wait a little bit longer until we make our statement.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**OFFICIAL RESIDENCES**

**Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly):** Mr. Speaker, recently the National Capital Commission invited all architects in Canada to submit bids for the restoration or renovation of the official residences of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, as well as the summer cottage at Harrington Lake and the residence of the Speaker of the House.

Can the Prime Minister tell the House what amounts will be spent for the renovation of each of these residences?

[English]

**Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency):** Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the minister I would like to take the hon. member's comments as representations and report back to the House at a later stage.

[Translation]

**Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly):** Mr. Speaker, regarding the residence of the Leader of the Opposition, how can the Minister of Public Works explain that money will be spent to renovate this residence when the Leader of the Opposition has deliberately chosen not to live in it in order to save taxpayers money?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I do not have any idea why. I do not think the Leader of the Opposition made his decision out of generosity. Actually, the platform of the Bloc Québécois stated that its leader could not live on the Ottawa side.

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

(1450)

[English]

**GUN CONTROL**

**Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

Do lawbreakers shop for their weapons after participating in a gun safety program and receiving firearm acquisition certificates?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada):** I am afraid, Mr. Speaker, I have some difficulty with the question. I take it my friend's question refers to the value of firearm acquisition certificates and training courses.

Let me use this as an opportunity to say in response, if that is what my friend intended to ask, that both the training courses and the application requirements for the certificates are, as the hon. member knows, intended to demonstrate the kind of controls we need for dangerous weapons, the determination of the Canadian people to ensure we have proper gun control and the responsibility of government to ensure the safety of our citizens.

**Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod):** Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. The minister did not catch the gist of my question at all.

Will the minister explain to the House why gun control measures are largely directed toward honest citizens instead of the criminal elements in our society?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada):** Mr. Speaker, the government is concerned that we avoid having firearms in the hands of those with criminal intent and to ensure the safe use of firearms which are owned lawfully.

Let me point out that the vast majority of deaths that occur by firearms in Canada each year occur through suicide. It is terribly important that those who lawfully own guns store, maintain and deal with them safely and prudently so they are not taken by someone who has the intent to do harm to themselves. The courses which were designed and are now in place are intended to achieve that.

We are after two things: making sure criminals do not have firearms and making sure those who have them lawfully deal with them safely.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**MIL DAVIE**

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

*Oral Questions*

On Saturday, February 12, the Quebec City daily *Le Soleil* reported that the mayors of the Magdalen Islands were putting on pressure for a new ferry. The same newspaper reported the next day that the Premier of Quebec was urging the federal government to give the work of building the new Magdalen Islands ferry to MIL Davie. This would kill two birds with one stone by reviving the MIL Davie shipyard and providing the Magdalen Islanders with the ferry they need.

Can the minister tell us today whether he is still considering buying a used European ferry as a serious alternative, even though it would create no employment here and its performance in the ice-bound St. Lawrence is questionable?

**Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, the government has a responsibility to provide service between Prince Edward Island and the Magdalen Islands and we will meet this commitment to the people who have long been asking for a ship to replace the *Lucy Maud Montgomery*.

As for building or buying a ship, this is a decision for the government, and we have not yet made a final decision. We are looking at all the possibilities. But the main objective is to provide a safe and efficient service to people travelling between Prince Edward Island and the Magdalen Islands.

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans):** Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us today, now, although he answered the same question I put to him on January 26, when he intends to make a decision on this?

**Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, as far as the decision affecting mainly the Magdalen Islanders is concerned, we know that they need a ship to replace the *Lucy Maud Montgomery*. We will try to come up with a solution.

Of course, the question raised by the hon. member as to whether the ship will be built or bought is one of the criteria to be considered in reaching a decision.

(1455)

It is a very complicated process. I met with the Quebec Minister of Industry, Mr. Tremblay, and we are discussing the whole issue in order to come up with the best possible solution, taking into account the needs of the Magdalen Islanders and of travellers and also our responsibilities to Canadian taxpayers.

\* \* \*

[English]

### AGRICULTURE

**Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Vegreville):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

In a letter sent to the office of the Prime Minister on Monday of this week the chair of Market Choices Alliance, made up of

several farm groups from western Canada, reminded you of your June 9, 1993 promise to call—

**The Speaker:** Perhaps the member would rephrase the question.

**Mr. Benoit:** —reminded the Prime Minister of a promise to call a producer plebiscite on the continental barley market issue and to honour the result. The continental barley market would allow farmers and grain marketing companies to compete with the Canadian Wheat Board in North American markets.

Will the Prime Minister honour his commitment to hold this plebiscite and if so when?

**Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

The quotations referred to which were attributed to the Prime Minister could have been attributed to me and to other members on this side. They were made in the context of an action taken by the previous government to remove barley, at least in part, from the jurisdiction of the Canadian Wheat Board. Subsequently the action was proved to be without legal authority and the subject of a court challenge. The court eventually held that the conduct of the previous government was outside the jurisdiction of the Canadian Wheat Board Act.

It was in the context of the legal dispute that we made our remarks about a year ago now, or last summer, in respect of the desirability of a plebiscite.

Having said that, we are not philosophically opposed to a plebiscite or to the proposition that was put forward by the farm groups referred to in the hon. member's question.

I would caution the hon. member and those farm organizations that we all need to think through very carefully both the procedures and the implications of a plebiscite with respect to this particular farm marketing issue because it is not quite as simple as those who might raise this proposition would lead some to believe.

\* \* \*

### CANADA POST

**Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Don Valley North):** Mr. Speaker, the other day an article in the Ottawa *Citizen* stated that Canada Post recently awarded an Australian firm a contract to produce Canadian stamps.

My question is for the Minister of Public Works and Government Services. Could the minister explain to the House the reasons behind this contract being awarded to a foreign country?

**Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency):** Mr. Speaker, first of all let me thank the hon. member for his excellent and, I might add, unexpected question.

*Oral Questions*

I wish to inform him and all other hon. members that the company supplying Canada Post with the quality material went bankrupt and as a result Canada Post had to go offshore.

The hon. member should be apprised that 57 per cent of Canada Post's printing requirements are done by Canadian suppliers. I can assure the hon. member we are continuing to work with Canada Post as well as Industry Canada to ensure that the remaining 43 per cent which comes from offshore will come from Canadian suppliers in the not too distant future.

\* \* \*

**GRAIN TRANSPORTATION**

**Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister of agriculture or Minister of Transport.

Last August the previous government began dismantling the Crow benefit portion of the Western Grain Transportation Act by cutting it by 10 per cent. It proposed further cuts over four years which would see the Crow disappear completely.

Since rents and farmland values are being forced down by this policy, making the refinancing of a diversified western economy more difficult, if not impossible, will the government fully reinstate the Crow benefit in perpetuity?

(1500)

**Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, unaccustomed as I am to taking the same line as the Minister of Finance, I think my hon. friend will have to wait for the budget to get the answers to questions regarding the Crow and a number of other questions we are all waiting with bated breath to have answered.

\* \* \*

*[Translation]***PATRICK TREMBLAY FOUNDATION**

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue. On February 11 last, I called the attention of this House to the case of the young Patrick Tremblay who is fighting a severe form of cancer. This young man has to undergo expensive treatment available only in Texas.

To raise money to pay for his treatment, a foundation has been set up. This foundation, we are told, will go on helping other people in a similar situation after Patrick is cured. Unfortunately, the Department of National Revenue is delaying granting the accreditation application that would enable this foundation to issue income tax receipts.

My question is the following: Is the minister aware that any further delay in accrediting such a foundation is endangering not only Mr. Tremblay's life but also the lives of all Quebecers and Canadians who suffer from the same disease and who could benefit from the assistance provided by this foundation?

*[English]*

**Hon. David Anderson (Minister of National Revenue):** Mr. Speaker, the issue is a very important and serious one particularly for the family involved.

The department is faced with the problem of the very tight legal requirements put on it by this House and of course by legislation. I will however attempt to see what I can do. In due course I hope to be able to report to the hon. member a decision one way or the other.

\* \* \*

**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot):** Mr. Speaker, I have an unexpected question for the Minister of Justice. It concerns the mercy applications under section 690 of the Criminal Code which pertains to applications for new trials by convicted Canadians.

As the minister knows, it has taken as long as four years for his department to process and decide on such applications. In view of this would the minister consider a review of the process within his department in order to expedite these applications? Would the minister give consideration to adopting the recommendations made by the royal commission of inquiry into the Donald Marshall case?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada):** Mr. Speaker, a review of the process surrounding the section 690 applications is presently under way in the Ministry of Justice. We are taking a close look at the recommendations of the Marshall inquiry.

We will be announcing in the next few months changes in the system to ensure that all such applications are dealt with fairly and as quickly as possible.

I should point out one thing. While it is true some of the applications in recent years have taken an extended period, I have examined the records and they show that in those cases counsel for the applicant was making additional submissions sometimes with new evidence. Therefore those working on the application had to take that new material into account which delayed the process.

I do agree we should process them as quickly as possible in the interests of fairness and justice. We do have it under review. I will be happy to report to the House when we have come to our conclusions.

**PRIVILEGE**

MEMBER FOR MARKHAM—WHITCHURCH—STOUFFVILLE

**Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the member for Markham—Whitchurch—Stouffville rose on a question of privilege and made submissions with regard to certain allegations that have been made.

He indicated when he rose on his question of privilege that he wished to clarify an issue, and I am quoting from *Hansard* at page 1387: “that has become a subject of debate not only in this Chamber but also across the nation”.

The member stated: “This has impeded my ability to function effectively and efficiently as the member of Parliament for the riding of Markham—Whitchurch—Stouffville”. Later on in his submission he stated: “I invite my colleagues in the House to examine my academic credentials and weigh the accusations in a rational and judicious manner”.

Mr. Speaker, I confirm that you and I had a discussion earlier this day with regard to this particular matter. I understand you are presently considering the question of privilege raised by the hon. member.

I indicated to you that I wished to make submissions on this question of privilege. Therefore I wish to ask you to defer your decision on this matter pending an opportunity for me and other members, if they so wish and desire, to make submissions as to why this particular unfortunate matter has affected the privileges of each of us individually and the House as a whole.

(1505)

As you know, Mr. Speaker, you will be called upon when a matter of privilege is raised to simply determine whether it is a matter of privilege and whether to allow a motion to go forward recommending a particular course of action.

I wish to give notice of my intention to move a motion. If you so decide there is a breach of privilege, I wish to move a motion that the matters affecting the hon. member for Markham—Whitchurch—Stouffville be referred to the elections and privileges standing committee. The committee would then have the authority to investigate the allegations against the hon. member. The committee would have the authority to hear and I would submit—

**The Speaker:** Order. Colleagues, I have not yet made a decision as to whether our hon. colleague does indeed have a prima facie case of privilege.

I will probably rule tomorrow but if I deem it necessary it may take some extra time. I want to make sure I consider all aspects of this submission which have been put forward. When I have decided, I will come back to the House and give my ruling at that time.

*Routine Proceedings*

Following the ruling we will then proceed in an orderly fashion as to whether or not the House indeed wants to consider anything further in the matter of privilege.

**Mr. Nunziata:** Mr. Speaker, I would like the opportunity as a member of the House to make submissions in advance of your ruling.

I believe that members of Parliament have been affected by this matter. We have certainly received telephone calls and letters. I simply wish and I would like you to confirm that I will have the opportunity to make submissions to you in advance of your decision.

**The Speaker:** I take the request under advisement. I will make a decision on this request as well as on the question of privilege and will come back to the House at the earliest possible time.

**Mr. Hermanson:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am a new member. Would the Speaker please clarify for the House whether this would be a question of privilege? I thought a question of privilege was regarding a personal matter. This does not seem to follow that qualification according to my understanding of the standing orders.

**The Speaker:** The Chair will indeed make a ruling on the question of privilege which is before the House at this time. The Chair will also consider the request put forward by the member for York South—Weston.

When I have made that decision on behalf of the House I will come back and report to the House at the earliest possible time.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS***[English]***THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment):** Mr. Speaker, the government believes that a healthy economy can and must flow from a healthy environment.

We owe it to our children to preserve and enhance the extraordinary environment with which we have been blessed. In doing so we can and must set the foundation for a whole new era of economic growth. We owe it to our children to explore the competitive advantage which a commitment to the environment will bring.

All of us have to change our behaviour in big and small ways beginning here in government. Individual Canadians have already been doing that in their own lives.

*Routine Proceedings*

The challenge for us in Parliament is to find means of accelerating the move toward sustainable development. That is why the government stated in the throne speech that the concept of sustainable development will become an integral part of government policies.

[Translation]

Our Parliament must be a leader when it comes to protecting our environment, preventing pollution and promoting environmental industries. We must take the lead by making the government more ecologically sensitive.

We must understand that government policies have an important bearing on people's attitude. Depending on the approach adopted by Parliament, Canada will or will not become a world leader in sustainable development.

(1510)

[English]

The blunt fact is that we can only succeed if we forge a partnership with all Canadians. Our government must set an example and must show leadership. We cannot do it alone. We need to work in partnership and in harmony with the provinces and territories, with labour and environmental groups and business. Most of all, we have to tap the talent and goodwill of individual Canadians.

We will only reach our goal of combining a strong economy with a strong environment when we include every Canadian in that effort.

Today, in that spirit of reaching out, in that spirit of inclusion, I am pleased to announce that the government will fulfil another red book commitment, our decision to proclaim the act to establish the national round table on the environment and the economy.

Parliament voted to establish the round table as a 25-person body composed of a broadly representative membership from across the country. It must reflect the need for concerted action in all areas of Canada if we are to achieve sustainable development.

The round table's purpose is to act as a catalyst in identifying, explaining and promoting the principles and practices we must adopt if we are to meet the needs of our generation without compromising the ability of future generations to live in a clean environment.

[Translation]

This round table can do research on critical aspects of sustainable development. It will provide useful advice to every sector in our country regarding ways to integrate environmental and economic considerations into decisions and actions. In my opinion, the round table can especially facilitate the creation of a partnership to make sustainable development a concrete reality in Canada.

In order to have this partnership, we must ensure that people have confidence in our innovative process, and we must give them the opportunity to fully participate. As well, we must take into account the opinions and interests of everyone, and a real commitment to reach a consensus is also necessary.

The round-table process has proven successful in Canada, and other countries are also using it. Indeed, a good number of provincial and local round tables have managed to solve sensitive and contentious issues by way of a consensus.

The national round table must have a strong legislative mandate to fully play its role of catalyst and promoter regarding environmental and economic issues. I am very pleased that the Prime Minister himself has agreed to chair this round table.

[English]

Membership on the round table on the environment and the economy must provide the links we need with communities, regions and provinces that are already taking creative ideas and translating them into practical solutions. The round table can and should involve Canadians at all levels of society, Canadians who can contribute to our collective goal of sustainable development by reaching out and motivating others to take action.

Openings on the round table will soon be published in the *Canada Gazette*, but here and now I want to ask interested members of Parliament to include applications from interested Canadians. In addition, I would be pleased to receive direct suggestions from members of Parliament on the balanced membership of the round table.

Through its unique character and make-up the round table is well positioned to seek new and pragmatic solutions to the problems facing our country and the world. The national round table can play a lead role in the current efforts to develop a sustainable framework for Canada.

Through this act we are effectively charging the round table with becoming a real agent for change in Canada.

[Translation]

We must find innovative and sensible ways of making Canada a leader in sustainable development. Together, we must find ways of changing how we think and particularly how we act. Sustainable development must become an every day reality. Mr. Speaker, I am disturbed when I see that even the Government of Canada ignores our own environmental capabilities in its policy. What we are doing here in this House should be a signal to all Canadian governments to follow suit.

(1515)

Each and every one of us is responsible for the prosperity of our economy and the cleanness of our environment. All of us, federalists as well as separatists, are responsible for our future. This is why we must give all Canadians an opportunity to express themselves and to get involved. In this sense, the government's decision to table an act creating the national round

*Routine Proceedings*

table on the environment and the economy is an important step, and I urge hon. members to sit at that table and to get involved.

**Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Minister of the Environment for giving us the text of her minister's statement at around 10 o'clock this morning.

The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy Act was finally proclaimed today, after being tabled in the House in April 1992 and receiving royal assent in June 1993.

This round table, the purpose of which is to merge the environment and the economy, was inspired by the concept of sustainable development. It is clear that whatever our political affiliations, as the minister said earlier, whether we are sovereigntists or federalists, we all breathe the same air and drink the same water. We are all concerned about the impact poor environmental management may have on our quality of life. And we are even more aware of the impact our present actions and decisions may have on the lives of future generations.

Not to support this legislation would be a sign of bad faith. And I am therefore very pleased, as is the Bloc Québécois, and as were all opposition parties at the time, to see the government go ahead with this concept for obtaining intelligent advice from various sources.

However, as the Liberals and the NDP pointed out at the time, some aspects of this legislation are not clear or are at least open to question. The corporation's operational structure allows it to work with a measure of independence. However, there is always the possibility that the table will have ties with the government, since its chairperson and members are appointed by the Governor in Council.

Earlier, the Minister of the Environment announced that the Prime Minister had agreed to chair the round table. If the minister is considering applications, I would be glad to oblige, if you agree, that is—

**Ms. Copps:** Pierre-Marc Johnson is vice-chairperson.

**Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac):** Yes, he is a good choice. He would have made a good chairperson.

**Mr. Ménard:** We know him.

**Ms. Copps:** Yes, I know.

**Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac):** So the corporation's operational structure allows it to work with a measure of independence, but there is always the possibility that the table may have ties with the government, since its members are appointed by the Governor in Council.

(1520)

However, I think the government is very much aware of this aspect, since it was involved in the debate on this legislation, and I am sure it will find a way to deal with this.

The government is comfortable with this legislation since under the Conservatives, the hon. member for Davenport proposed certain amendments that were, in fact, adopted.

The Liberal government is well aware that our air, water and soil—our physical environment—are very much at risk, to put it mildly. In some cases, they have reached the point of no return.

We should not focus on one particular form of consultation at the expense of the other components of our environment.

Often, to show it is environment-conscious, the government adopts this kind of legislation while at the same time cutting back on related commitments. Take, for instance, the defunct Conservative government's green plan. In 1990, the plan's initial budget of \$3 billion over five years was reduced a few months later to \$3 billion over six years. This is a reduction of 20 per cent in the same year, and there were subsequent cuts later on.

The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy can be an effective tool, provided partisan considerations are excluded. No group has the right to use the environment to promote partisan interests.

Next Tuesday, February 22, the Minister of Finance will bring down his first budget. In the section on environment and sustainable development, we will see whether the government puts its money where its mouth is.

Since we know this is one of the first priorities of the Liberal government, we can assume that budget allocations for the Department of the Environment will help us make up for lost time.

In concluding, I want to say that we should support this initiative for consultation and co-operation. We must take advantage of this opportunity to communicate with various players in sectors that are in a position to help the environment. The Liberal government has chosen this vehicle to get out of its ivory tower. The results will be gratifying, provided it does its homework.

[*English*]

**Mr. Bill Gilmour (Comox—Alberni):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the hon. minister for this initiative. I believe it is the direction we want to go and that most Canadians want to go. Most of us feel inside that we are environmentalists and this comes from the way we recycle our paper or compost or garbage. It is the mood of Canadians to move in this direction.



*Routine Proceedings*

I would like to go back to a little history of where we have come from, because I believe the pendulum has swung through from the economy versus the environment. It was an either/or situation and I believe it was to the detriment of many Canadians.

That basically was the old way. I believe the new way, the integration of the economy and the environment, is the way to go because that is sustainable development. I believe that is the direction that this legislation is taking.

The goal is to combine a strong economy with a strong environment. This is basically as the minister has said and I believe it is excellent.

(1525)

Now to the round table itself. I would hope that their perspective is balanced. I believe that balance will come from the people who are on this board. I would hope that the make-up of the board is not all one side of the equation or all of the other. I hope there is a very broad base so that we have the voice of all Canadians.

I would also hope that there is a national perspective, a perspective that comes from coast to coast and including the territories. I would be most disappointed to see the make-up of this round table from largely central Canada or one point in Canada.

I would like to move on to the mandate because I am a bit unsure, and that is maybe because I am new in the House. Is this an advisory body or a legislative body? To whom does it report? The minister said that the Prime Minister will be chairing it. Does it report to the House, to caucus or to the Prime Minister? I see it is to you.

Basically those are the points I wanted to address. I would hope that the meetings are open and that the public is involved. What will be the cost? We need to know where Canada is today, which is in a debt hole, and how much this is going to cost.

Finally I would hope that this is a meaningful process, that three or four years down the road that we have not rehashed what we know about sustainable development only to find that we have not really moved ahead.

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**CRIMINAL CODE**

**Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-215, an act to amend the Criminal Code (aiding suicide).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to introduce a bill that would amend the Criminal Code to allow terminally ill people the right to die with dignity with the assistance of their doctor.

People with terminal illnesses, some suffering terrible pain or indignity, are now being assisted to die but too often it is being

done by secret physicians who perform secret acts or, worse yet, by family or friends with no safeguards whatsoever in place.

[*Translation*]

The current legislation which dates back to 1892 can be extremely cruel to those who are dying and to their families.

[*English*]

Sue Rodriguez, a woman who lived her life and approached her death with incredible courage and dignity, urged the Minister of Justice in her final declaration to introduce legislation into Parliament soon on this subject.

I hope this bill will be one step along this road, a road that leads to a more decent and civilized society for all Canadians.

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

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT**

**Mr. Guy H. Arseneault (Restigouche—Chaleur)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-216, an Act to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act (jury service).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act so that persons serving on juries will not be deemed ineligible for benefits simply because they are involved in this activity.

(1530)

[*English*]

The object of this bill is to prevent people who are eligible for UI and who are selected for jury duty from being ruled ineligible for their unemployment insurance.

In a number of cases in the last couple of years nationally, the judges have dismissed jurors who were receiving UI on the grounds that they may be disqualified for UI. This is to point out that problem and rectify it.

I had a fair amount of support last time in the House, and I am again looking forward to that support.

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

**Mr. Arseneault:** I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This bill with similar intent was presented in the 34th Parliament. At that time I had received unanimous support of the members in the House. There were well over 100 members in the House at that time who had agreed to move this bill to committee for consideration.

It had gone to committee for consideration but unfortunately the House prorogued before it was returned and reported.

I would ask the House for consent to have the bill proceed to second reading and committee today.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It would appear that the member, as he has just indicated, must ask for unanimous consent of the House. If he receives that then he can ask for unanimous consent to send it directly to committee.

Do members agree to ask for unanimous consent?

**Mr. Hermanson:** Mr. Speaker, there is a great number of new members in the House. I think it might be proper to follow normal procedures and let new members become familiar with this legislation before we give unanimous consent.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Chair is in the hands of the members. I take it the member for Kindersley—Lloydminster is denying unanimous consent. Very well. The Chair will not have to put the second question.

\* \* \*

## PETITIONS

### SERIAL KILLER BOARD GAME

**Mr. Murray Calder (Wellington—Grey—Dufferin—Simcoe):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 it is my duty and honour to rise in the House to present this petition duly certified by the clerk of petitions on behalf of the undersigned residents of Wellington—Grey Dufferin—Simcoe and the surrounding area.

The petitioners humbly pray and call upon Parliament to ban the sale of serial killer board games and prevent any other such game or material to be made available in Canada in order to protect the innocent children of this country.

[*Translation*]

### PORT FACILITIES

**Mr. René Laurin (Joliette):** Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of submitting to the House a petition from several hundred residents of Saint-Sulpice who are calling on Parliament to intervene in an effort to get fisheries and oceans Canada to reconsider its decision to demolish the wharf on the waterfront, on Bord-de-l'eau Road, in Saint-Sulpice, and to take the necessary steps to ensure its preservation.

\* \* \*

## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

**The Deputy Speaker:** Shall all questions stand?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

## Supply

**The Deputy Speaker:** I wish to inform the House that because of the ministerial statement, Government Orders will be extended by 18 minutes, pursuant to Standing Order 33(2)(b).

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

(1535)

[*Translation*]

### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

#### ALLOTTED DAY—SOCIAL HOUSING CONSTRUCTION

**Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides)** moved:

That this House condemn the government's inability to re-establish and increase budgets for social housing construction programs.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is with a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction that I rise today to take part in this debate on social housing.

Since I first rose in this House on January 21 to make a member's statement, I have taken every opportunity to remind the other members that 1.2 million Canadians have urgent housing needs. These people scattered in every one of our ridings are facing an intolerable situation. They are living in appalling housing conditions and their rents are eating up an excessive part of their income.

For several years, elected members of the government have been claiming left and right that Canada is a highly-rated country where living conditions are the best. I sincerely believe that we must come down to earth and look at reality. Comparisons between countries are no longer valid. They are often dangerous because they breed indifference and hamper the recognition of real problems. They create false impressions on real life.

In June 1993, the UN committee on economic, social and cultural rights published a report on poverty in Canada. It painted an devastating picture of the housing situation and expressed surprise that despite the obvious existence of homeless people and the inadequate housing conditions, social housing expenditures only amounted to 1.3 per cent of public spending.

So this international, high-profile organization has cut government big guns down to size by saying that Canada is not meeting one of its first obligations, namely to provide adequate and affordable housing for everyone.

What is true for Canada is even truer for Quebec as 44.3 per cent of Quebec households live in rental housing, compared with a Canadian average of 37.1 per cent. So the problem is more acute there. The poorest provinces are also confronted with this difficult situation.

In the face of this strongly denied reality, the government must act quickly and responsibly in this regard. It is now putting its head in the sand by constantly repeating that it does not have the money.

*Supply*

It recently informed us that it will spend money on residential rehabilitation. But this money does not do anything to help the homeless because they have no residence to rehabilitate in the first place.

While this kind of program creates jobs, these jobs too often lead to a rise in the cost of private rental housing. By improving housing, owners raise rents. This, in turn, makes it worse for low-income households who must shell out more money.

The Liberal government's declarations clearly show that it is moving toward maintaining the policy put in place by the Conservatives in this area. The Liberals' first 100 days are nothing to reassure poorly housed Canadians. They are following in the footsteps of the Conservatives whose policies and decisions could be called the "social housing massacre".

Available figures confirm beyond question that a massacre occurred between 1984 and 1994. Until 1984, some 25,000 new social housing units were being built in Canada every year. It took the Conservatives 10 years to kill that formula so that, since January 1, 1994, the federal government no longer contributes to the construction of a single social housing unit. It is quite a record to go from 25,000 to zero. We can see that their decisions helped them to break another record, from 152 to only two members in this House.

These alarming figures show the abdication of the federal government in this area.

(1540)

The government also asked the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to become more efficient, in other words to cut costs. There are worrying indications that CMHC is looking for ways to save and is contemplating rent increases in social housing to increase its revenues. Basically, they would be taking money out of the pockets of the less fortunate, attacking their slender income to help other people with housing problems. What a shameful thing to do.

That is what we are headed for with the government's silence. The members opposite are not reacting. It is as if there were no housing problems in their ridings, and all their constituents had decent housing. I think that is hardly the case. I would ask them to go out in their riding and see how things really are. Then come back and get in touch with your Minister of Finance to apprise him of the situation and urge him to make funds available in his next budget, on February 22, to re-establish and increase budgets for social housing programs.

Of course, the Minister of Finance has been going on and on with the same story for weeks. He is putting us to sleep. He is trying to make us bite the bullet of austerity. This budget will be

a tough one, we are told over and over. But the money is there. It is only a matter of making the right choices. The government must take its responsibilities and act with courage and fairness.

We, in the Bloc Québécois, have suggested that the government go over each program, each item of government expenditure to cut the fat, the squandering, the costly duplication within the federal administration. This process could have allowed us to find funds to help provide housing for the less fortunate segment of our society. Unfortunately, the minister opted for travelling across the country to hold meaningless pre-budget consultations instead. During that time, public funds are spent lavishly and inefficiently. Year after year, the Auditor General has a lot to say on this subject.

Here in this House and the Hill, we can see examples of squandering of public funds every day. Apparently, the sky is the limit. Simplicity and efficiency are not commonplace. Specific examples: Public Works are repairing roofs in winter and rebuilding stone walls in minus 30 degree Celsius temperatures. To carry out summer jobs during the winter comes at a premium and certainly does not do much for the productivity of the workers. It is sheer squandering!

Other departments are literally devouring public funds. The Department of National Defence for instance, with a \$12 billion plus annual budget. Piggish! Incredible amounts are swallowed up by that department's equipment programs. The Canadian patrol frigates will end up costing us \$9 billion, while the ADATS air defence system initially designed for our military bases in Germany, but which will not be used and has been classified as non operational, has cost us all of \$1 billion.

Governments will soon embark upon infrastructure programs that will require substantial funding.

How can we tell the less fortunate that the government does not have any money for social housing when it is spending all this public money, often astronomical sums of money?

How are we to explain to Mrs. Johanne Lepage from Châteauguay who is spending 46 per cent of her monthly income of \$1,524, or \$700 a month, on rent, heat and hydro for herself and her four children, how are we to explain to her and her four young children that the government spent \$1 billion on useless radars but does not have money to build decent social housing that she could rent for just 25 per cent of her income? This lady is not the only one in such dire straits. In Quebec, 404,000 households spend over 30 per cent of their income on rent and there are 273,000 more Canadian households in the same situation. And there is worse: 194,000 Quebec households are spending over 50 per cent of their income on rent. In Canada, there are 584,000 in that situation.

*Supply*

(1545)

Mr. Speaker, this situation is scandalous and unacceptable. Canada, a supposedly wealthy and developed country, has a poor record in this area. The Liberals have no choice but to re-establish the budget for social housing.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs is very familiar with and has always been a staunch advocate of social housing. On May 5, 1993, the hon. minister rose in the House to call upon the former government, and I quote, "to act as soon as possible to save the social housing and co-operative housing program in Canada". Not even a year ago, the minister was claiming that the government was trampling the fundamental right of every individual to decent housing.

I would hope that the Minister of Foreign Affairs will continue to champion this cause. I challenge him to press his colleague, the Minister of Finance, to untie the purse strings and make funds available for social housing. I challenge him to make his colleague aware of the plight of the poor in Canada. At the time, other ministers, including the Minister of Human Resources Development and the Minister of the Environment and Deputy Prime Minister, also defended social housing programs. I hope that they have not had a change of heart, simply because they are in power. I challenge them to prove that they are concerned about social housing and to take some concrete action!

Other options must be explored in order to find the funds to help the most disadvantaged in society. The government will make major savings by eliminating certain tax shelters. It is important, if not essential, that large corporations and the wealthy contribute to our society. How can we say to the poorest people that the government's coffers are empty when the wealthy do not contribute anything?

Every month, hundreds of thousands of tenants ask themselves the same question. How am I going to pay the rent? They wonder how they will manage when their income consists of social assistance, unemployment insurance or old age benefits, or derives from a precarious, low-paying or part-time job. These households are forced to make desperate choices, which can mean cutting either their food, clothing, transportation or basic care budget.

How can we stand by while young people go hungry every month? The members opposite and the Minister of Finance should give some serious thought to this question. We must never lose sight of the fact that these children are the generation of the future. We have a responsibility to provide for them. Moreover, the government must not shirk its responsibility. It must work to eliminate social and economic disparities between members of our society.

Social housing is the only way to provide affordable housing for all Canadians in need. It offers much better housing than the private market, housing which can be adapted to specific needs and requirements. Co-operative housing, especially, helps people pull themselves up and take greater control over their living conditions. It helps physically improve old neighbourhoods, keep the resident population and generally enhance the quality of life.

Social housing also creates jobs. According to Clayton Research Associates Limited, building 1,000 co-operative or social housing units creates 2,000 jobs; renovating them creates 800. Furthermore, very significant savings on health and social services can be made. Families will be better housed, better fed and better clothed.

Economy and employment—that is what the Liberal platform is all about. What are you waiting for to act? We, in the Bloc Québécois, feel that the Government of Quebec should have full responsibility for housing. The Société d'habitation du Québec should be the only one in charge.

(1550)

As long as Quebec is part of the federal system, we will demand a major and equitable financial contribution from it.

The Liberals, and especially their leader, kept hammering away on the theme of dignity and pride before October 25. Dignity and pride everywhere and always. Now we need action. It is time to prove that you yourselves have pride and dignity.

I conclude by telling you about Jacqueline Cayen, a 32-year old mother of three children, who lives on \$1,442 a month. She went back to school recently and intends to obtain a high school diploma in January 1995. She says, "My rent costs me \$350 a month, and electricity is \$150 a month. In winter, it is cold near the windows and I heat the shed. To pay \$500 on rent, I have to cut on food and clothing and especially hope that nothing unforeseen will happen".

So it is up to the government to act.

[English]

**Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):**

[Editor's Note: Member spoke in Inuktitut.]

[English]

**The Deputy Speaker:** I trust members of the Official Opposition will not expect a simultaneous translation of those comments. I think the people upstairs are probably wondering what to do about it now as well.

**Mr. Anawak:** If I was not wearing my earpiece earlier I probably would not have understood a word the hon. member was saying.

*Supply*

I just want to comment on a couple of things that the hon. member mentioned or omitted. One point was the fact that aboriginal people have the poorest housing. I did not hear the word aboriginal once in the whole presentation.

The other point was that I did not hear anything, other than Canadian or global, about how many houses are needed in Northwest Territories or in British Columbia. I just heard the statistics in Quebec.

I know that the member is a member of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition and I think the member should represent all Canadians. I did not hear that.

I would like to comment also on her comment about the hon. minister for external affairs. She seemed to contradict, telling us that we were not aware of all the housing needs and then quoting the hon. minister. The minister must have been representing his constituents and Canada when he made his concerns known about housing and therefore did not need lessons from the hon. member about not knowing what was going on in our ridings over here. Does the hon. member have any understanding of the housing needs of aboriginal people across Canada as well as in Quebec? Does she have any statistics about the state of poor housing in areas other than Quebec?

(1555)

**Mrs. Guay:** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to answer the member in English. Maybe he will understand me better and he will not need the translation.

The hon. member should know it is not the first time I have spoken about social housing. I have talked about aboriginal people also and their problems. He probably was not here to hear it. I always talk about social housing across Canada not only in Quebec. I gave statistics about Quebec because we are from Quebec. However I always speak for every Canadian in every riding everywhere.

**Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency):** Mr. Speaker, first I want to thank the hon. member for putting forward a motion which discusses some very substantive issues relating to social housing.

I do not wish to be too congratulatory to my colleague opposite, however the subject matter before us this afternoon can be debated in a very civilized way and perhaps suggestions from all quarters can be put on the record. We can then present them to the Minister of Finance, who as we all know, is in the process of preparing his budget.

Although I thank the hon. member for putting the subject matter before the House I cannot concur with the way in which the motion has been written and placed before the House.

I want to assure all hon. members that as the minister responsible for Canada Mortgage and Housing, I take my mandate very seriously, as does the government. We fully understand the challenges ahead and we are committed to carrying out the government's agenda in the area of housing.

Make no mistake about it, the government is committed to maintaining a strong role in social housing across the country. Our commitment reflects our desire to help the least advantaged in our society and we will continue to do just that.

In the speech from the throne the government clearly signalled its resolve to address the fiscal situation while at the same time acknowledging the continuing importance of social priorities. The government is respecting its promises within its current financial capabilities. I want to underline that because I have been asked questions numerous times on the floor of the House. I have gone out of my way to make it abundantly clear that the fiscal capacity of the Government of Canada is somewhat limited as the previous administration basically left the cupboard bare. The deficit of the Government of Canada is \$12 billion over and above what we had anticipated and what we had been told during the election campaign. I am sure hon. members opposite have concluded that it does limit the fiscal capacity of the government to move in all the social areas in which we might wish to move.

Having said that to the substance of the motion before us, I cannot concur with the way in which it has been written, although I am happy about the subject being debated just days before the budget.

(1600)

It should be clearly stated that the government is providing close to \$2 billion for the direct financing of some 652,000 households across the country. That is a very substantial amount of money which is lent under the auspices of the direct lending program, administered by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

To suggest otherwise is being totally irresponsible in my view. I direct those comments not necessarily to members opposite but to those who are outside the Chamber and those who may come into the Chamber and speak to the issues, that the government is making an important contribution to social housing. The hon. member made reference to the fact that this administration is the same as the old administration. That is not true.

The throne speech which was tabled in the other House and which has been referred to by the Prime Minister and by myself on several occasions, talked about social housing. We have put down \$100 million over a two-year period for the residential rehabilitation assistance program.

With a limited fiscal capacity, we are providing \$100 million to individuals in order to improve the quality of the stock of homes. This is a significant contribution in terms of the health

and safety which will be across the country, not in one particular area but all Canadians in all provinces will have an opportunity to benefit.

We have embarked on a very ambitious program. I will get to it in a little more detail when I talk about the meeting I had with provincial ministers of housing. We intend to save through cost cutting measures over the next four years a total of \$120 million. All will be directed for social housing. Those initiatives will be in concert with shared objectives and providing those who are in need with capacity to move on and to improve their quality of life. This is another significant aspect of the social housing budget.

It should be noted that Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has forecast for 1994 a modest recovery in new housing starts, which is approximately 162,000. If I can use this term—hon. members opposite may find it rather amusing—it is a conservative figure of 162,000 units.

Other forecasting organizations, such as banks and trust companies, indicate that those figures are very low and housing starts in Canada will be much more significant than that. However being the modest type of government that we are, we intend to go with the low figure and that is the figure we are sharing with our colleagues across the way.

Social housing also has implications for other areas and other aspects of the housing industry. For instance in the city of Toronto the issue is contaminated lands. In my discussions with ministers of housing across the country we have put this issue on the table for action by ministers and deputy ministers. In fact we discussed this when federal, provincial and territorial leaders met in Toronto. We agreed that our deputy ministers would pursue this vigorously, that we would have several meetings and hopefully make decisions on those kinds of issues, which have an impact on what the private sector does vis-à-vis social housing as well as other types of housing.

It should be noted that the theme we use for this issue is one of common sense.

(1605)

I want to underline that there are numerous individuals who think that one cannot build a home anywhere in the country in 1994 because of environmental concerns. There are others in this country who say to hell with environmental concerns, they will build the homes regardless.

There are two competing views of a problem. I suggest, and ministers of the crown both federally and provincially have said, that we must have some semblance of common sense to the approach that the housing industry must take in the weeks,

### *Supply*

months and years ahead. That is an important aspect to which we must give due consideration.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation is embarking upon a comprehensive—I want to underline the words—examination of the rental market research. My colleague who spoke earlier in the House with regard to the motion made reference to the province of Quebec and it having more units for the purpose of rental housing. That is very true.

However, there are other areas in the country whether in Calgary, Edmonton, British Columbia, parts of Atlantic Canada, where the rental component is an essential element. We hope that in the next couple of months to put together the terms of reference for a comprehensive review of rental markets.

I would be interested in hearing the views of hon. members on that subject as I will be hearing the views of the private sector and other stakeholders across the country.

Encouraging innovation is another aspect of our policy as it relates to housing. It relates directly to social housing in terms of the things we might be able to do. I make reference to the good work that my colleague, the Minister of Natural Resources, has been able to do. I am sure you, Mr. Speaker, have followed that quite closely over the years.

I refer of course to R-2000 which in my view has provided an upgrading of the quality of housing in the country which many private stakeholders as well as non-profit stakeholders have taken advantage of over the years. Therefore, encouraging innovation will be another aspect of our housing policies as we approach this fiscal year, 1994-95.

I want to talk for a few minutes if I may in the time that I have remaining, which I believe is about 15 or 20 minutes—

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

**Mr. Dingwall:** Three. I do want to say that our commitment to housing for Canadians recognizes that there are groups with special needs which must be met.

Victims of family violence is one such group. It is astounding to me that the incidence of family violence continues to increase. I look forward to the day when we no longer need to build and maintain shelters for women and their children fleeing domestic violence.

For now we need to address this critical issue in the best way we can. We will continue to provide funding for shelters and other housing commitments under the family violence initiative.

Canada Mortgage and Housing provides financial assistance for project haven and project next step, two programs that provide emergency shelter and long-term housing for victims of family violence and their children.

*Supply*

There are 458 emergency shelter units that have been committed under the project haven initiative. Under the second phase of the family violence initiative, again a part of the social housing objectives of the Government of Canada, and the next step program, 150 self-contained units and 100 emergency shelter units are planned with a budget of \$20.6 million.

During the upcoming months Canada Mortgage and Housing will be discussing with its counterparts in the family violence initiative new opportunities for Canada Mortgage and Housing participation in a possible third phase to the family violence initiative.

This assistance goes a long way to providing much needed shelter for women and children. The federal government is also committed to improving housing for seniors and persons with disabilities. As part of the national strategy for the integration of persons with disabilities, Canada Mortgage and Housing has been administering a \$10 million two-year demonstration program called home adaptations for seniors' independence, or HASI, to help older seniors make their homes more liveable.

In the few moments that I have left—I am sure there will be a number of questions that hon. members will want to raise—I want to say two final things. One is with regard to housing for aboriginals on reserves and housing for aboriginals off reserves across the country. My colleague, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, and I have been working jointly on these issues and we hope to be able to put a paper before our cabinet colleagues to address some of these serious situations.

(1610)

I want to assure the House and hon. members that it is certainly a priority for me and it is certainly a priority for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development that we will want to pursue this with vigour and creativity. I have spoken to a number of aboriginal groups which have come to me, and I want to underline this, with some very creative and innovative ways in which they as individuals can take control of their own destiny and provide the kinds of quality housing that they need.

Finally, with regard to the province of Quebec, la belle province, I have had several discussions with the minister responsible for housing in the province of Quebec whom I am sure all members, particularly members opposite, would want to congratulate in terms of the new responsibilities he has achieved in the recent cabinet shuffle, including those of housing.

I am now embarking upon a program with my provincial colleague in the province of Quebec, and possibly elsewhere in the country as well, in terms of how we as governments can get better value for our dollar. The province of Quebec has earmarked moneys for housing under the renovation sector. It is a very exciting, good and solid program.

Through our moneys under the RRAP, the \$100 million, and the amount of money we would provide for Quebec, we are trying to make an arrangement whereby we would lessen the administrative nightmares which are associated with the delivery of the housing in order to have the one level of government deliver that, of course maintaining a federal presence and maintaining some degree of credibility for the Government of Canada as we make expenditures in that great province, but lessening the administration and getting more money to the people who are really in need.

I want to assure hon. members in my final sentence that we as a national government are seized with the issue of social housing. We are attempting through a number of vehicles with our provincial counterparts to provide the best value at the best price for Canadians across the country.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before going to questions and comments the hon. minister being a seasoned member will know the question of parliamentary language, a four-letter word starting with *h* and rhyming with “bell”. The eyebrow of one of his own members went up when the minister used the word. I see in Beauchesne's sixth edition, page 147, that that phrase in context has been found to be unparliamentary in the past. I wonder if the minister would perhaps reflect on it.

**Mr. Dingwall:** Mr. Speaker, I will accept your intervention, but I hope the Speaker will do the honourable thing post 6.30 this evening and read the “blues” and ascertain that the word which he anticipated and thought that I had said was not what he has referred to but was a word which is called h-e-c-k, which is different from what he had said.

However, if the hon. Speaker is not mistaken, I wish to withdraw any reference to that particular word. I would hope that if the Speaker has made a mistake he will come back to the House in due course.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Getting back to the substance of the debate, questions or comments.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec):** Mr. Speaker, since the member is showing an interest for our belle province, I would like to give him a few statistics regarding social housing funding in Quebec. I wonder if he is aware of the fact that, from 1986 all the way up to 1993, there have been some significant discrepancies in the level of federal funding to various provinces in Canada, including Ontario.

Quebec received between 10 and 13 per cent less from the federal government. That is why it is now calling for an improvement in the level of government expenditures. We say expenditures, but what we are really talking about are job

creating investments. I am giving this piece of information to the minister because I would like him to tell me what his government intends to do to improve the social housing program in Quebec, in view of the fact that, for the last ten years, Quebec has been short changed compared to other provinces.

(1615)

Let me explain the criteria used by the federal government to allocate funding for housing. Quebec is at a real disadvantage because, to determine each province's share of the budget, Ottawa grants each province a certain number of units based on the real building cost per unit. Yet, we know that the average building cost per unit is higher in Ontario. This analysis shows how Quebec has always been short-changed by the federal government.

I would like to add another point. The member mentioned new social housing starts by CMHC. There might be new housing starts in Ontario and other provinces, but certainly not in Quebec. I received a letter from a director in the CMHC economic department saying that there was no sign of recovery in housing starts in Quebec. I would like the minister to comment on that.

[English]

**Mr. Dingwall:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank and congratulate the hon. member because I think those are very appropriate and very sound questions that should be raised on the floor of the House of Commons.

First of all, I agree with my colleague that this should not be interpreted as subsidies. We should look at it as investment. I could not agree with her more.

I cannot and will not try to rewrite history in terms of the amount of moneys which has gone to the province of Quebec. There are some rationales which have been given to me as to why Ontario, for instance, which has a bigger population and higher costs in terms of social housing, has received more and Quebec has received less.

I can assure the hon. member, who has raised a fundamental question of equity, that under this administration Quebec will get its fair share. I can assure the hon. member of that.

The hon. member made reference to a number of other issues. However, it should be noted that the Government of Canada will also be providing \$5 million over the next four years in financial assistance for unique, non-profit housing co-operatives in the southwest of Montreal. The hon. member probably knows that. This was done as a pilot project and we are continuing with that particular funding.

I want the hon. member to know as well that in terms of the units in the province of Quebec, she knows and I know that the predominance of rental units as opposed to new free standing units is greater in the province of Quebec than anywhere else in

### Supply

the country. Hence, we will work closely with the Quebec government, as I indicated in my earlier remarks, in terms of providing moneys for renovations to that social housing stock.

We will also work closely with the Government of Quebec and stakeholders in that province as well as in other provinces to see whether there are creative ways we can put money into projects to provide the kinds of new housing or renovated housing to house Canadians.

I do not want to mislead the hon. member in thinking that there is a Santa Claus who sits two seats down from me, the Minister of Finance, who will walk in on February 22 and say to the people of Canada that he has a bag of goodies and this is what he is going to do.

It is important to be fiscally responsible federally, provincially, municipally, in non-profit organizations and the private sector so that we can arrive at expenditures which meet our objective which is to provide affordable, reasonable and healthy housing for Canadians.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Paul Marchand (Québec-Est):** Mr. Speaker, many of my constituents who live in low-cost housing in my riding have made representations; they are quite numerous. Their income is not high and they are very concerned by a possible 25 to 30 per cent rent increase .

Could the minister tell us today if I can go back to my riding and reassure my constituents by telling them their rent will not increase following the next budget?

(1620)

[English]

**Mr. Dingwall:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has again asked a very excellent question.

The hon. member cannot have it both ways. One cannot put a hand on one's heart and plead for new social housing for Canadians across this country and only look at one side of the ledger, which is to cut expenditures and duplication, without looking at the other aspect in terms of revenue increases.

I believe a total of eight provinces across the country have moved from the 25 per cent to 30 per cent or are in the process of moving in that direction. It is called rent geared to income. That is what the hon. member is referring to. It is a good question.

I cannot give any assurances until such time as the Minister of Finance makes that kind of decision in the budgetary papers which are to be available on February 2.

Let us not put our heads in the sand and say that we can only look on one side of the ledger, but we cannot look on the other side of the ledger when we are both saying that we need additional moneys for the purposes of creating new social housing for Canadians who are in desperate need.



*Supply*

**Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question concerning the minister's comments on aboriginal housing on and off reserve.

The statistical material that I have been able to make available indicates to me that housing on and off reserve for aboriginals has a habitable life span of some 16 to 25 years as compared with 35 to 50 years for other housing, for non-aboriginal housing. This would indicate to me either there is substandard housing being provided in those cases or that housing is not being properly maintained and cared for.

Has the minister taken into serious consideration those statistics in providing the renewal of housing?

**Mr. Dingwall:** Mr. Speaker, I am not going to comment on the efficacy of the statistics that my colleague has used, although being in the House for some time I will have to accept them at his word.

The only thing that I can reply to the question is that in my deliberations over the last three months, the last 103 days as a minister of the crown, with aboriginal groups across this country I have found an attitude among aboriginal leaders that they do not want handouts. What they want is an opportunity like we have had over the years to be able to have affordable housing. They are coming forward with creative, innovative, dynamic ideas which will involve the private sector, which will involve governments at all levels, and which will involve other stakeholders to provide that kind of quality housing.

In terms of the substance of the question that the hon. member has asked, there is substandard housing on reserves across this country. Governments should work with aboriginal people, not against them, to provide meaningful solutions to real problems.

To quote a friend of mine who shall remain nameless, shelter in this country, next to water and land and the air we breath, is probably the most important aspect of Canadian life.

I hope I can call upon the hon. member for creative ideas, creative suggestions and support when we put our money where our mouth is.

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** I believe that the period reserved for questions and comments is over.

[*English*]

We will continue debate with the hon. member for Macleod on behalf of the Reform Party.

(1625)

Do I understand that members of the Reform Party wish to divide their time?

**Mr. Hill (Macleod):** Mr. Speaker, I inform the House that we would like to divide our time. Could the member for Calgary Southeast speak prior to me?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Yes.

**Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast):** Mr. Speaker, it is with keen interest and deep concern that I rise today in the House to address the motion put forward by the Bloc Quebecois.

Acknowledging the seriousness of our discussions here today is more than just debating how to provide more effective and efficient support to those in need. It is a challenge most fundamental coming to the realization that responsible financial management requires thoughtful planning. Nowhere in this motion do I sense a strategy or any idea for that matter of where that money is going to come from.

Spending in the country continues at an alarming rate. Even as I speak every minute represents \$88,410 in additional debt. The jobless, the discouraged, the fearful and the poor are still out there. That is very overwhelming. What are we going to do?

I believe we have to ask ourselves three things when we consider expenditures of any kind, especially in the area of social spending. It takes courage to be objective when reviewing social reforms because our emotions are involved and that is when it is most difficult to make a decision.

My questions are what do we want, how do we get there, and what will it take?

Let us look first at what Canadians want. People are outraged that our government has been in an out of control spending mode for two decades. Our nation is like a Hollywood front, all glitter and glass purchased on borrowed money with nothing of substance holding it up.

It is a stunning picture on the reality of this House that not since the minority Parliament of 1972-74 has Parliament directly acted to cut expenditures. Even in that situation in which the government lacked a controlling majority, the House of Commons achieved two small cuts amounting in total to \$20,000.

To give a sense of proportion, since the current procedure for committee review of estimates was initiated in 1969, Parliament has authorized about \$2 trillion worth of expenditures. This means that Parliament has made cuts that represent only one millionth of one per cent of total expenditures that it approves.

Here we find the Bloc Quebecois having spoken eloquently on numerous occasions about deficit control and debt reduction, bringing forward a motion to spend money but not explaining within that context how that money will be found.

If we want to reduce the deficit and begin a meaningful effort at getting our economy on track and our social reforms in place, the second question I ask is how will we get there? We begin with the right people. We need people who will stand up and say this is not good enough, we are not willing to solve tough issues

*Supply*

by following the easier path. Throwing money at programs is easy.

I believe the social role of government is determined by clarifying priorities, responding to the give and take as governments attempt to pay for increasingly costly social programs while coping with the ever diminishing economic base.

However, in the motion before us today there is no appearance of a give and take, merely an arbitrary dole, a short sighted, stop gap solution.

Canadian welfare and social programs were designed on a premise of high employment. Therefore, social programs and economic policy are mismatched. Given that the overwhelming need for social support is the direct result of the poor economic health of the country, tinkering with pieces of social policy will not help. However, changing our economic policy will help.

(1630)

If a room is freezing because of frigid air coming in through a broken window, we do not turn up the heat; we fix the window. So it is with this motion. We are turning up the heat when we need to fix what is broken.

It is the unhealthy fiscal policy of this government and that of previous governments which are causing such a strain on our social programs. As the debt has grown interest payments have consumed an increasing proportion of the government's spending. They now constitute an enormous strain on the treasury. In 1974 they consumed only 11 per cent of the government's spending but today they consume 25 per cent. That is \$40 billion from the treasury which go to interest payments on the debt. That, not coincidentally, is about equal to the federal deficit.

The point I am making is one given to us by the Auditor General: "In 1992 in an age of scarce public resources and growing debt, seeking ways to see that things get done by or through others rather than spending money to do them becomes increasingly important". Are we not ever going to hear the wisdom of those words as we apply mental energy ever seeking answers to the pressing social concerns of the day?

I ask the question: What will it take? I know courageous leadership is part of the answer. A government that listens to its people is made stronger and can deal more effectively with tough issues.

However, the Bloc motion puts more emphasis on spending to relieve an overburdened social system. I cannot support that. However I support greater financial sustainability over the long term. This requires a new commitment to sound, long-term financial management.

Another important question now needs to be asked: is it better to help households obtain adequate housing by directly providing the housing or by assisting them to increase their incomes?

This means fostering an environment in which people are able to work. It is critical that we maintain federal spending at current levels for high priority functions, including labour force and training and adjustment programs.

It is also necessary that provinces have the freedom to distribute federal funding and manage their own programs. This comes back to my earlier comments about priorities. Maintaining federal transfers to provinces remains key in terms of preserving those programs targeted to those in need. I believe that public money should be regarded by governments as funds held in trust and that governments should practise responsibility, particularly the responsibility to balance expenditures and revenues.

We need to see significant spending cuts that are judiciously planned for the long term. I applaud those moves by the government to withhold funding support for programs for which there is no long range plan or strategy for the expenditure.

In conclusion the choices and decisions we must make have to be so clearly laid out before every Canadian so that all of us understand where we are going and what it is going to take to get there. This is my challenge to this House and to the Bloc Quebecois on its motion.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her speech, but I must admit to having some difficulty understanding the underlying logic. I say this in a very cordial way, because I do appreciate her input in this debate and I would like to ask her a question.

First, I noticed that she makes no difference between social programs and housing when, in my opinion, a distinction should be made. I will come back to this later in the 20 minutes allotted to me. My question is: Does she not feel that when the government intervenes in the housing sector, it becomes a job-creating sector? It is a sector where, if we invest public money, we get an interesting return on our investment.

(1635)

I do not know if the hon. member contacted the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada. This organization conducted a very extensive and competent review of this issue and came to the conclusion—corroborated by American studies—that every time the government invests to build a co-op unit, 2.2 jobs are created.

This example illustrates how social programs reform and social housing cannot be put on an equal footing. With all due respect, I must tell the hon. member that her speech did not reveal a great deal of social understanding, because when we discuss public finances, we cannot simply reason like an accountant trying to balance revenues and expenditures.

*Supply*

I come from a riding where there are many social housing developments and I can tell the hon. member that families living in co-op units do not have to spend as much on housing; consequently, they can invest more on food and health care, and are therefore more likely to exert less pressure on those social programs which she seems to be so concerned about.

[English]

**Mrs. Brown (Calgary Southeast):** Mr. Speaker, if I may be so bold I just have to say that you do have an interesting way with your hands. You kept gesturing making me think I was running over my time or that I had to wrap up my comments. You might want to put your hands in your pockets, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. member for his question. He has to know how difficult this question is for me to address because it is based very much on emotion. I would be the last person to look at something from an accountant's perspective. When it comes to compassion requiring difficult decision making, that is difficult because this matter is very much couched in difficulty.

I am sorry I did not make the relationship of social reform, social programs and expenditure more clear to the member. I am committed to an economic agenda. As members of the House of Commons during this particular Parliament it is extremely important that we get our spending under control. There will be a very inefficient and ineffective system for care for everyone if we do not get our financial house in order.

While I was campaigning I did meet people who had lost their homes or who were going to be losing their homes because of the very sad condition of our economy. That is the perspective I brought to this debate and which I presented to the member.

**Mr. Dan McTeague (Ontario):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to commend my hon. colleague on her insight in terms of not only this debate but some of the comments she has made on a wider economic plane as it relates to housing.

I have worked in the housing industry. I take exception to one of the questions concerning the need for federal government funding in the area of social housing as a means of stimulating jobs. I can assure the hon. member that in the private sector we often found ourselves with private money competing with public money. The result was not only waste and duplication, but at the end of the day there was lack of housing.

I have a very simple question for the hon. member. Would she consider looking at housing as a means for the private sector, with all that is attached to it, to make a more affordable and accessible product in this country through financial institutions? That seems to be the real reason many developers and builders are not able to bring on a good product at an affordable

price for the economy and for people to get access to quality housing.

**Mrs. Brown (Calgary Southeast):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. Within the context of my presentation I did quote the 1992 Auditor General's report.

(1640)

That is exactly the point I was trying to make. We seek other ways to get things done in this particular area by approaching problems using private sector funding.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona):** Mr. Speaker, I want to make one brief comment.

The hon. member raised a good point when she talked about the changes made to the way the estimates were dealt with in 1969. It seems to me it is at that point that Parliament and the House of Commons began to lose control if not necessarily over spending, it lost its ability to affect spending, to have a committee actually have an effect on estimates. Therefore we got into the situation in which estimates are deemed to be passed by a certain period of time whether a committee has looked at them or not.

When I first came here there was at least an effort to question the minister and to spend some time on that. However even that atrophied after a while because members came to notice that it did not really matter what they said and these things got to be passed anyway. The minister simply took up the necessary time. When it was over it was over and the estimates were passed. The point is well taken. No amount of parliamentary reform in the last little while has been able to overcome that dilemma.

Just for the record much parliamentary reform happened here in the 1980s by unanimous consent or with the agreement of all parties, although not the reforms in April 1991. However, those particular reforms in 1969 were not the result of all-party agreement; they were brought in by the use of closure at that time by the then Liberal government.

**Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to refer to the motion the Bloc posed to us:

That this House condemn the government's inability to re-establish and increase budgets for social housing construction programs.

As I looked at this issue I looked at social housing construction in an overall sense in an attempt to put it in the frame of reference of Canada's needs.

I found that this whole program is under the auspices of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and that CMHC has a social housing stock of 650,000 units in our country. There are four separate programs: the native housing program; the seniors housing program; the next step housing program for women who are victims of violence; and the housing program for low income

Canadians. The total cost of this social housing program in Canada is \$2 billion per year. This is a net amount incorporating received rents as well as the cost.

I looked at the statistics to find out the number of current housing starts. Because this question came from the Bloc I tried to zero in on why the Bloc would be particularly interested in this question.

I found that in Ontario this year there are some 7,200 starts on the go and in Quebec there are some 900 starts on the go. I imagined, if I were in Quebec I would look at those figures and ask whether somehow that was fair. This probably was the reason the Bloc brought this issue to the House. I will not comment on whether or not those figures are fair. As a member from Alberta I looked down the ledger to see how many housing starts there are in Alberta this year. I came to the conclusion that there are zero housing starts in Alberta this year under this program.

I will not go into great detail on whether the statistics tell me anything, but I asked myself whether this amount was sufficient for social housing in Canada. I am not sure I have the answer to that but I pose that as a question for us all.

I reflect on a comment made to me not many days ago. I met a New Zealand diplomat and said to him: "I am pretty close to Canada's debt situation. I am pretty close to the circumstances in our country. Could you make a comment for me, as someone from outside who should be unbiased about our situation in this country? Could you compare Canada to New Zealand for me?" He did that. As he compared Canada's situation today with that of New Zealand not so very many years ago, he said he did not think he saw the political will in our country to deal with the debt situation we have. I do not think he said that there is the political will among the population of Canada to stop over-spending.

(1645)

I looked him in the eye and asked—he had gone through this in his country—whether he could tell me what is necessary in Canada for us to realize the seriousness of our situation. He replied that he thought the International Monetary Fund would have to come in and shut us down.

I thought about his comments very carefully as I sat on this side of the House, trying to say to the Canadian public that our debt situation is serious. I am trying to say not directly to the Bloc but to every member in this House that our debt situation is extremely serious.

I wish somehow this message could get out before the IMF does have to shut us down because if it has to shut us down we will lose not just social housing, but we will lose every single social program that we value. If that happens this debate to me becomes somewhat inadequate.

### *Supply*

I tried to prioritize what I think are the social programs that should be highest on the ladder and prioritize them so the House could hear what I think is important. Number one is health care. Number two is welfare for those in need. Number three is the old age supplement for the needy. Number four is unemployment insurance for short term unexpected job loss. I would put as number five such things as social housing.

If I put a different priority on those social programs than members opposite I am very willing to listen to their reasons where they would change the priorities. I would ask them to convince the members of the House that we could in fact change those priorities.

If the programs are not distributed fairly I would say that the Bloc has every reason to complain on the basis of fair distribution of the funds. I would support them in doing that very thing.

I would like to draw an analogy which members may think curious, but I have a hobby of racing cars. I have always wanted to go to the most famous endurance race in France, Les 24 heures du Mans. This is 24 hours of racing on a circuit in France. I do not think I will ever have the opportunity to go there to participate in that race but I did have an opportunity three years ago to race in the 24 heures du Daytona. This is the North American equivalent. It is a second equivalent but it is the equivalent of that race.

I found myself at Daytona in international circumstances in a race car that would go about 175 miles an hour. The banking at Daytona is so steep that if you get out of the car you can hardly walk. It is very steep. The car I was in was fast enough to go in the middle lane at Daytona and the really fast cars were on the top lane at Daytona. They would travel over 200 miles an hour.

It was interesting as I sat in the car at the fastest I had ever gone with the landscape blurring around me. The cars going by in the top lane would go by so fast that they would move my car down a couple of feet on the banking. On one lap as I went around the corner I looked ahead and I could see a rain cloud. The track is big enough so that we were a long way from the rain cloud but I was sure that the rain was falling on the track.

As I approached the rain I slowed down. A car went by me so much faster than I who had not seen the rain and he spun out on the track in front of me, smashed into the wall, tore off the front of the car and the motor came down. I slid through and luckily avoided him.

The analogy I am trying to draw is that our country is at 300 miles an hour on the banking heading for disaster in terms of our debt and our deficit.

(1650)

I heard the minister say that he is seized with the issue of social housing. I say to the minister and to the other members of this House. Do not be seized with a narrow issue that is only your own issue. The other issue for the country that is seizing us

*Supply*

around the throat is the deficit and the debt. I beg members to pay attention to that issue and not be narrow in their processes.

**Mrs. Anna Terrana (Vancouver East):** Mr. Speaker, I come from Vancouver East which has some very poor areas. These people cannot afford a racing car. Neither can they afford a house or a place to live.

I understand there are about 8,000 people that do not have proper shelter. Some of these people live in shelters that in fact are like pig sties. I would like to add that we have probably the largest aboriginal population in my area.

We talked about dignity in our red book. There is no dignity without an address. It is true that we are in tough economic times. I understand that very well, but I feel that it is very important that we help those who need help.

We have talked about creativity and some very good programs that have been put in. I am glad about that. I think that creativity is what we have to concentrate on. What is being done by CMHC for instance with the aboriginal groups is in fact trying to get private capital and working together with governments.

We also talked about reallocation of resources. I think we have to concentrate on that. What the Liberal Party is trying to do now is go through a series of consultations, reviewing all of the social programs and I would invite everybody to participate. We are asking the people at large to participate, so parliamentarians in this House should be the first to participate. On that point, we can also establish where the priorities are.

It is very important that we look at the whole scene. I have different statistics than what the hon. member has just given. I have them here with me. If he wants to see them I am prepared to share them with him.

**Mr. Hill (Macleod):** Mr. Speaker, there was not really a question in the comment, but I would like to say that the racing car that I mentioned was not my own. It was a rented car. Four of us shared it. I hope the member does not think I am talking from a different strata.

I noticed that last year there were 427 housing starts in British Columbia. That compares very favourably with what that I see from Quebec. We might well compare statistics.

I am not suggesting for one second that social housing is not important. I am suggesting that it be placed on a priority list and that is what I ask each member to do.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf):** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if, according to parliamentary procedure, I can say that the hon. member is dead wrong. You see, the people who have poor lodgings cost a lot of money to our society. Their health is bound to deteriorate, their children do not do as well in school as they

should be and, eventually, do not find the jobs they would otherwise have been able to get.

A society that does not care for the people living in poor conditions and those in need gets into debt, because it does not tap the human capital and the talent of those people. In fact, if we were to follow the suggestion made by the hon. member, not only would we be putting the rope around our neck, but we would also be pulling on it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** If my memory serves me right, there should not be any problem with the expression "dead wrong". The hon. member for Macleod has the floor.

(1655)

[*English*]

**Mr. Hill (Macleod):** Mr. Speaker, I understand the hon. member's passion about this particular issue but I would simply ask him and everyone else in the House what they would give up so that they could have more social housing. In the light of our financial circumstances in our country what would they give up? If they would push this priority higher, what would they take away?

I simply say come and explain to me what they would give up.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The time has expired for questions and comments.

**Mr. McTeague:** I have only a question for the hon. member, because like his colleague—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The time has expired for questions and comments.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Quebec):** Mr. Speaker, the United Nations have declared 1994 the International Year of the Family. We must however admit that the families of Quebec and Canada are having a very hard time making ends meet.

In such a meaningful year, should a responsible government not be preparing a policy on social housing to assist the most needy among us in their quest for a reasonable and affordable home?

The needs in social housing are most strongly felt in urban areas. For example, in Limoilou and in the lower town, in my riding, there are at least 1,200 households on waiting lists for a place in low-cost housing projects and more than 600 households are waiting for co-operative housing.

Nearly half the persons living in downtown neighbourhoods, who represent 85 per cent of the total population, live below the poverty line. Given such a situation, we believe it is important that, through an urban planning policy, we preserve and revitalize the life of those neighbourhoods.

But there is more. Studies show that in the riding of Québec alone, 38 per cent of all families in the lower town and Limoilou must devote more than 30 per cent of their gross income to housing. In the riding, 9,430 households out of a total of 20,165—that is almost 47 per cent of all families—have a gross income of less than \$29,999. Forty-seven per cent! Are there any members in this House who would not react to such statistics?

The average income of men in the central neighbourhoods of the riding of Quebec was \$14,078 in 1986 as compared to an average income of \$19,440 for the province as a whole. Women are always poorer than men, but the gap was not so wide in their case. It is easy to understand why: their average income was \$10,260 compared to \$11,884 for the province. According to Statistics Canada, out of 21,450 economic families, 29.1 per cent were considered to be low-income.

Still in my riding of Québec, there are 4,960 single-parent families, 86 per cent of which have a woman as head of the household, that is 4,260. For the province of Quebec, that figure is 81.86 per cent. The equation womanhood=poverty is still quite real.

Considering that 52.7 per cent of dwellings in downtown Quebec were built before 1946 and that another 22.8 per cent were built between 1946 and 1960, it is easy understand the importance of a renovation assistance program.

Furthermore, the 1986 data show a rental occupancy rate of 79.5 per cent in the old neighbourhoods of the riding while the average for the province is 45.1 per cent. The situation of most of my constituents is very clear. They are too poor to buy a house, therefore they rent in buildings built before 1946 and they devote more than 30 per cent of their income to that item alone. In fact, in Quebec today, 404,045 households are obliged to spend more than 30 per cent of their income on housing. In November 1993, the Popular Action Front for Urban Redevelopment estimated that 195,000 Quebec households spent more than 50 per cent of their income on housing.

(1700)

That is what being poor means. In view of these alarming figures, the government should make a formal commitment to support social housing. Quebec City understands. As I mentioned before in the House, on January 10, 1994, the city adopted a resolution asking the federal government to review the budget for the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. The city demanded adequate funding for social housing, reinstatement of the co-operative housing program and a new program to provide assistance for renovation of rental housing.

In this way, the municipal authorities want to ensure that families do not pay more than 25 per cent of their income for housing. How can we expect families that who have to spend more than 30 per cent of their meagre income on housing to

### *Supply*

make ends meet? How can they afford decent food, adequate clothing, medicine and a few much-needed leisure activities? It would take more than a degree in economics or home economics to accomplish that.

Although it may be a cliché, we will keep saying it until we get our message across: Let the government put its money where its mouth is. The Bloc Québécois has a mandate to promote sovereignty. It also has a mandate to support government action that is necessary and socially responsible, while defending the interests of Quebec.

It is a fact the federal government has imposed standards on Quebec that have prevented the latter from adopting a social policy that meets its real needs and aspirations. More and more, Quebec is losing its ability to control its social development. Quebecers are suffering as a result of poor federal management of the economy, and they are stuck between reductions in transfer payments and the obligation to abide by federal standards.

There is, however, a commonality of purpose between the government and the Bloc Québécois with respect to the challenges facing the government. In fact, we support stimulating employment through programs that create real, well-paying and long term jobs. We support tax reform to relieve the tax burden on families and others in our society.

Finally, we support reducing the deficit by putting public financing on a sounder footing. However, public spending should not be cut at the expense of the neediest in our society. There are Quebecers and Canadians who have been left to fend for themselves and in recent years have seen these cuts affect the bare necessities of their lives.

We believe that investing in social housing will be an investment in job creation. Every social housing unit built means 2.2 jobs. I say this because job creation seems to be this government's prime objective, and it was part of its platform in the last election campaign.

Perhaps we could backtrack very briefly. In its well known red book, the Liberal Party of Canada said, and I quote: "In many areas and neighbourhoods in Canada, the quality of housing needs to be improved in order to achieve adequate standards of safety, health and energy efficiency. The recently cancelled Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program, which provided a loan or grant for home renovation to people of modest incomes, should be revived as a method for investing in the physical and social fabric of our communities. A Liberal government will make \$50 million a year available through the RRAP loan program for two years".

Further on, we read: "We must choose to make our social investments where we believe they will do the most good and have the greatest effect for the resources spent and for the long term future. We will focus our efforts on health care, children's

*Supply*

needs, safety in our communities and the quality and cultural identity of Canadians”.

(1705)

On January 18, 1994, the elected government announced with great pomp in the throne speech the reintroduction of the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program. It outlined its intention to take measures to combat violence against women and children. It also announced the establishment of a centre of excellence “to ensure that women’s health issues receive the attention they deserve”.

On February 13, the Liberals celebrated their first 100 days in office. They even published a nice brochure outlining their accomplishments. By the way, it would be interesting to know if we could have built or rehabilitated one or more housing units with the money used to produce this brochure. This pamphlet called “Creating Opportunity: The First 100 Days” does not say anything about social housing.

In its February 8, 1994 letter to the Prime Minister, the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women pointed out that, in its February 1993 report, the Standing Committee on Justice and the Solicitor General said that crime was the outcome of the interaction of a constellation of factors. It is a social problem with many elements such as poverty, physical and sexual abuse, low self-esteem, inadequate housing, school failure and unemployment.

The council recommended that the Prime Minister take into account the committee’s conclusions in a multi-faceted approach aimed at guaranteeing safe homes and communities.

Women’s health and safety is largely dependent on access to adequate and affordable housing where they can care for their children and protect themselves, if necessary, from a violent spouse or ex-spouse. It is the same for older women, for handicapped women and for so many women who are still waiting.

Ottawa’s gradual pull-out has demonstrated the limits of the administrative agreements between Quebec and the federal government in cases of unilateral withdrawal. Quebec has been caught short by the extent of Ottawa’s financial pull-out from housing, after following the strong and highly centralized leadership of its main financial backer under this agreement.

The federal budget allocation criteria for programs that have since disappeared have always put Quebec at a disadvantage, particularly because of the rigidity of the so-called national standards. This situation must cease, and the concept of equity must be reintroduced in the management and allocation of funds earmarked for these programs.

Contrary to the terms of the framework agreement with Quebec and as a result of its unilateral pull-out from social and co-op housing programs, the federal government is destabilizing Quebec’s housing programs and affecting the planning of such housing by municipal authorities. It is one of the major shortcomings of the administrative agreements.

Let us take Quebec’s current situation as an example. Just two weeks ago, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation announced that it was granting seven subsidies of \$20,000 or less for projects aimed at improving the affordability and selection of housing. Of the seven groups who received subsidies, five Ontario municipalities shared a total of \$51,000; one Alberta municipality received \$18,750; and one Saskatchewan municipality got \$10,000. There was nothing for Quebec. Such figures make comments unnecessary.

Of course, when we talk about subsidies, the economic situation comes up again.

Let me remind the government that Canada’s military spending is six times what we used to spend on social housing.

In conclusion, I hope that, in this International Year of the Family, the living and housing conditions of Canadian and Quebec families will improve thanks to concerted, adequate and equitable government action.

The Bloc Québécois is calling for the immediate reintroduction of the co-op housing program, for the creation of a rental housing rehabilitation assistance program, for assurances that the poor will not have to spend more than 25 per cent of their income on housing, and for wider access to home ownership through the co-op movement.

(1710)

We are asking the Canadian government to embrace the social philosophy of other countries such as Great Britain and the Netherlands, where social housing accounts for 70 per cent of all rental housing, and Sweden, where this proportion is 55 per cent. In Canada, in 1991, social housing amounted to 10 per cent of all rental housing.

It is a question of social justice and not a question of passion as Reform members seem to think.

[English]

**Mrs. Dianne Brushett (Cumberland—Colchester):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member for her in depth remarks on social housing in the province of Quebec and in particular on her in depth knowledge of the red book and the investigations and recommendations the Liberal Party went to in bringing forward its recommendations for social housing across Canada.

We have that mandate. If the hon. member would look at the record it was the Liberal Party that brought in RRAP back in the 1970s. It will be the Liberal Party that will institute RRAP again.

*Supply*

The hon. member refers to the special CMHC housing projects. The money granted a few weeks ago was for special projects that were based on submissions. Perhaps the hon. member could inquire if the province of Quebec made any submissions for modern day housing, for further insulation, for new arrangements and architectural designs that were conducive to more efficient housing as we move into the 21st century.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Gagnon (Québec):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her comments. I will try to find out whether there were any submissions from Quebec. What I know is that I received at my office a letter from the CMHC saying there were no housing starts in Quebec under the program mentioned. I will find out more about that.

[*English*]

**Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Middlesex):** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what history the hon. member opposite studied when she makes her remarks, but I know I am not unfamiliar with the history of the province of Quebec.

Like all provinces Quebec has benefited enormously from being a partner in Confederation. Quebec has certainly benefited financially.

Is the hon. member not aware that when one considers equalization payments, the province of Quebec has seen more tax dollars flow to it than have flown out of that province? Is she completely unaware of the enormous financial benefit that has accrued to the province of Quebec from the other provinces of Confederation?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Gagnon (Québec):** Mr. Speaker, let us say that we do not have the same figures. The figures I have on social housing show that, since 1986, the difference in grants for social housing, between Quebec and other provinces, varies between 10 and 13 per cent.

This is not the only area in which Quebec does not get its fair share. There are others. I do not think we have the same book.

[*English*]

**Mr. O'Brien:** Mr. Speaker, if I might pursue this, I think perhaps we are starting to get somewhere. We are hearing a Bloc member who is willing to admit, if I heard the hon. member correctly, that perhaps she was not looking at the whole picture. I would submit it is time that the hon. member did that. It is time all members of the Bloc did that. It is time they understood what other Canadians understand.

Most of us are very pleased to have the province of Quebec as part of Canada. Quite frankly we feel that Quebecers will always choose to remain a part of Confederation. The statistics are unchallengeable. Quebec has benefited far more from taxes going to it as a province in this Confederation than it has paid

out when one considers all fiscal arrangements in its totality. If the hon. member is unaware of that I would be happy to share those statistics with her.

(1715)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Gagnon (Québec):** Mr. Speaker, I believe the debate today is on social housing. It would take more than two minutes to list for the hon. member all the areas where Quebec was short-changed. I do not say he is right. I urge all my colleagues from the Bloc to give the hon. member the right answers. Whether it be research and development or agriculture, we know very well that Quebec is not always well served by the federal system.

Take my riding for instance. I had two giant candidates running against me on October 25, but despite all the good things they promised would come from the federal system, the people of the Quebec riding said: "No, we do not want to relive what we went through all those years". This is a debate we may have some day in the House, but not now.

**Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf):** Mr. Speaker, we are talking about social housing, we are talking about people in need, and it should be clearly understood, contrary to what was just said, that Quebec receives as much money as it is putting in, around \$28 billion. Quebec taxpayers pay \$28 billion to Ottawa and receive in return \$28 billion from Ottawa. It is their money. But the way it comes back to them has a direct impact on social housing. This money comes back mainly as unemployment insurance and transfer payments for public assistance, instead of coming back as research and development contracts or other types of government contracts which would create jobs, as is the case in Ontario and other provinces.

We can see, first of all, that there is absolutely no preferential treatment for Quebec. It only receives what it puts in. But Quebec is treated less fairly because the quality of the money it gets back is inferior compared to other provinces, and that has a direct impact on social housing.

Would my colleague, the member for Québec, care to comment?

**Mrs. Gagnon (Québec):** Mr. Speaker, I agree with these comments. Indeed, the facts we are presenting are very important. The money the federal government returns to Quebec takes the form of unemployment insurance and social housing funding, and we do not get our fair share. Therefore, I believe that we should ask for a debate, in this House, to see item by item, issue by issue, how Quebec feels in this so-called fair system.

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonnette):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member had the courage, and we must be grateful to him for it, of turning the debate to broader considerations. I think that we could agree with him, if he wants to engage in that exercise—I am inclined to think that he is an avid reader—I



*Supply*

might suggest that he refer to two documents which mobilized all of Quebec. These documents were tabled at the Bélanger–Campeau commission, of which he is aware. These documents give a very accurate picture of the investments made not since Confederation, because the comparison would not be exact, but in the last 20 years.

We referred to experts, not nationalist experts, we studied, we surveyed the kinds of investment made by the federal government, and I believe that our colleague would find out that in many fields, Quebec received less. Where it received more, and there are all sorts of variables; we talked about demographics, we talked about its strength as a region within Canada, and I am sure that if our colleague went through these documents, he would recognize their intellectual merit.

The conclusion of Bélanger–Campeau may surprise him, but it disappointed us. Where Quebec received the most is in unemployment insurance. That certainly explains why the Conseil du patronat du Québec does not want Quebec to take over unemployment insurance. Our colleague will agree that unemployment insurance is not what one can call an economically productive investment.

So if he wants to get into this, I am prepared to cooperate so that together we can look at these figures following the work of Bélanger–Campeau.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I do believe that the member for Québec has no comment to add to what was just said.

**Mrs. Gagnon (Québec):** Indeed, I have no comment. I just would like to say that I agree with my colleague from the Bloc Québécois.

(1720)

We should go back and reread certain works which have already been published and analysed to see how Quebec often finds itself the poor relation in several federal policy areas.

**Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard):** Mr. Speaker, given that we are just now coming out of the recession, social housing has become an important consideration and an ongoing concern for the Liberal Party. While housing provides jobs, our aims are not economic ones. Rather, they have more to do with social awareness.

As a physician, I see social housing as much more than construction materials and labour. To a large extent, it helps to improve the quality of life of the least fortunate members of our society, and this is what is important.

The federal government's long-standing commitment with its provincial and territorial partners to help Canadians in need to find decent housing has helped Canada earn a reputation for

itself as a nation with one of the highest standards of housing in the world.

The federal government ensures that all Canadians, regardless of who they are or where they live, have equal access to federal housing resources.

Social housing in Canada addresses the needs of specific groups, namely senior citizens, single-parent households, disabled persons, native communities and low-income earners. In short, social housing is inextricably linked to the physical structure and social fabric of our communities.

The federal government has made a long-standing commitment to social housing in this country. It currently subsidizes approximately 652,000 units on an ongoing basis. More than half of these units also benefit from provincial or territorial subsidies.

I want to stress again today that the federal government is not shirking its responsibility in the field of social housing, as some circles would have us believe. We will continue to respect our present commitments to social housing.

Annual expenditures of roughly \$2 billion reflect the federal government's fierce determination to help Canadians in need.

Moreover, regardless of how much money is allocated to social housing in various regions of the country, the quality of existing housing must also be improved. No one should have to live in substandard housing. No one should have to live in housing that fails to provide the basic necessities.

Providing decent housing for all Canadians is important to the government. That is why the government recently announced in the throne speech it was reintroducing the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program for both owner-occupants and disabled persons as well as the Emergency Repair Program in rural and isolated areas.

This means that the federal government will be spending \$50 million a year for the next two years, that is to say a total amount of \$100 million, to help low-income households bring their dwellings up to safety and sanitation standards.

The RRAP is expected to create thousands of direct and indirect jobs. Of course, the re-establishment of this program will have significant economic spin-offs on the Canadian economy, the construction industry, real estate, the manufacturing industry and related services.

The provinces and territories have been asked to share the costs of this established program. The province of Quebec for instance recently announced the REPARACTION program, a home renovation program for low-income owner-occupants. In the light of the reintroduction of the federal RRAP and the new provincial home renovation program, the federal government will be working in a partnership with the Province of Quebec to

make arrangements regarding how costs should be shared and particularly to try and eliminate to some extent duplication of services.

(1725)

The federal government is doing its best to provide acceptable levels of service to Canadians and to do so in the most responsible manner, given the present budget restraints.

In the same spirit, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation is offering a direct loan program for all public housing to maximize the use of existing resources and cut spending.

With this program, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation expects to save approximately \$120 million over the next four years. Through these measures of effectiveness combined with new initiatives like direct funding, the federal government will be able to maintain the current housing stock and, more importantly, have a certain leeway to implement new initiatives in the area of social housing.

All levels of government have now recognized the need for innovative solutions to promote the production of affordable social housing. It will be imperative that the federal government work in conjunction with the provinces if we want a global and concerted approach to be adopted.

Also, the federal government has reiterated that program changes and the gains made in terms of efficiency within the social housing envelope will serve to create new housing initiatives.

At a recent meeting of housing ministers, it was agreed to pursue joint rather than unilateral efforts in that area.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the ultimate goal of this government is, as stated in our red book, to put human dignity back into public housing policy.

Before closing, I would like to take this opportunity to thank publicly the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation for its involvement in the funding of homes for battered women. Without its support, there could be no such home in Pierrefonds—Dollard.

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve):** Mr. Speaker, I want to make sure I understand the hon. member. I sensed some enthusiasm, which I do not quite share but which I can understand, considering that he is a government member. Are we talking about the same thing since, so far as we know on this side of the House, the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program or RRAP, is exclusively for the benefit of owner-occupants?

Something is provided for aboriginal people but, for the years to come, the program's funding is exclusively for owner-occupants. In that sense, to refer to it as an income maintenance program for the have-nots of our society implies a form of generosity which was not intended by the cabinet.

### *Supply*

If I misunderstood the scope of the program, I will be very happy to find out that it will indeed be made available to a larger number of people. However, the press release clearly stated that the program was exclusively designed for owner-occupants.

**Mr. Patry:** I thank the hon. member for his comment. As I understand it, the RRAP is designed for owner-occupants. But, as we just saw, that government program could be expanded to other groups.

This program is targeted to owner-occupants, but will it become a form of family support? It could be the case, because if we help those who have difficulty making ends meet buy materials to make their house more comfortable and safer, it becomes a form of direct support. However, the goal is really to make social housing more accessible to a large number of people.

**Mr. Ménard:** A social housing unit?

**Mr. Patry:** It is still a social housing unit occupied by an owner-occupant.

(1730)

I come from a much more prosperous area than you. Your riding of Hochelaga—Maisonneuve is a riding—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Please address your comments to the Chair, so as to avoid debates and arguments.

**Mr. Patry:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am talking to you, but I am looking at the hon. member.

In conclusion, this is a program designed for owner-occupants, but poor owner-occupants in particular. I think this is how we should put it.

**Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides):** Mr. Speaker, I really appreciated the speech by the hon. member for Pierrefonds—Dollard. I agree with my colleague from the Bloc Québécois, the member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, that the RRAP program is for homeowners. If you want to buy a home, you cannot be poor, you have to have some money. The problem today in our major urban centers is that some people cannot get clean, decent accommodation. The problem is very serious. These people will take whatever they can find. Often, they are on welfare and will have to pay steep rent for unhealthy, dirty lodgings. We must realize that the RRAP program is not for those people.

I have been fighting for social housing from the very beginning, because these people need help, not the homeowners. We can give part of the money to homeowners, but there are still a lot of people that we are not helping at all. Often, these people are not able to defend themselves, because they are uneducated, illiterate and unable to face reality and speak for themselves.

These are the people I fight for, these are the people we have to help. We cannot do it with such programs as RRAP.

*Supply*

**Mr. Patry:** Your comment is 99 per cent accurate since the RRAP program is of course for homeowners, but that does not mean we cannot care about them. There are a lot of homeowners, and I know they are some in the Montreal area and in the province of Quebec, who are overtaxed like the rest of us and have trouble making ends meet. I understand very well the concerns the hon. member has about new programs, because we must think about new programs.

I decided to go into politics mostly because of social considerations and I can assure the hon. member that I will support any new social program. All I can say for now is that the government has estimated, through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, that it will be able to save about \$120 million which should go, I am told, to new programs. To some extent, new programs similar to those we have for homeowners will have to be set up for new housing.

[*English*]

**Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member on his comments. I would also like to point out a couple of things before coming to a question.

I would like to apprise members of a report that was done by the committee on aboriginal affairs on aboriginal and northern housing. Members might want to read and reflect upon the poor state of housing for aboriginal people across the country.

As much as my colleagues from the Reform would probably like us to go back into tepees and igloos because of the poor state of housing, I want to comment that home repairs for rural and low income areas are welcome. However this does not adequately address the northern and aboriginal communities.

(1735)

Some of those houses that are built in the aboriginal and northern communities almost do not meet the basic standards. It is not necessarily the best idea to repair the homes. It is better to replace them.

When the government fell on October 25 and social housing was cut, Northwest Territories was getting something in the neighbourhood of \$47 million for social housing. That cut had a devastating effect on aboriginal and northern housing because although \$47 million may not seem all that much, when the total population is 55,000 in Northwest Territories and we are already short by 3,800 units, \$47 million means an awful lot.

I know the hon. member supports the resumption of the funding for social housing but more from my point of view we need the \$47 million for the Northwest Territories social housing program. As I said, if we do not get the housing our

alternative is to build igloos in the winter and tents in the summer. I do not think that is acceptable today.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Patry:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question. I will simply tell him that I agree with him and that this government is very much aware of the huge housing needs of native people, on and off the reserves.

In 1993–94, the federal government will spend some \$5.4 billion on native-oriented programs and we will try to do as much as possible because this is very important.

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve):** Mr. Speaker, I thank you for leading us during this debate. You have been patient. I am sorry I broke the rules so often, and I promise I will be more disciplined next time I take part in a debate.

I feel the need to recall, for the benefit of listeners who are joining us just now, that on this allotted day the official Opposition insisted on moving:

That this House condemn the government's inability to re-establish and increase budgets for social housing construction programs.

I thank our critic, the hon. member for Laurentides. You will understand that each and every word in this motion is meaningful. We decided to address the issue of social housing because we feel there is a subtle but nevertheless unquestionable correlation between social housing and poverty.

The definition of poverty rests in part on statistics. In our society people are poor if they have to devote more than 56.2 per cent of their income to their essential needs such as clothing, housing and food.

We are having this debate at a time when large parts of Canadian as well as Quebec society have never been so poor.

For our part, we are firmly convinced, and this will be a focus of commitment for the Official Opposition, that there are ways to put an end to that poverty. I must add that the speakers on the government side have addressed social housing somewhat in isolation, as if this were not related to the issue of poverty. Poverty puts on a new face. Being poor in 1994 is not the same as being poor in the 1980s. Deep changes have occurred since then. In 1994, we do not speak of poverty like the Senate did in the 1970s when it was mandated to study poverty in Canada. Poverty strikes the young and people of my age, in their early thirties.

(1740)

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

**Mr. Ménard:** And not only people of my age, but also women and heads of single-parent families. Fortunately, there are less and less senior citizens living in poverty.

*Supply*

Concerning social housing, it seems appropriate to remind the House of three facts that were a real trauma for parliamentarians. They were largely brought to light by a group to which I would like to pay tribute. It is a pressure group called FRAPRU that is very well known in Montreal and the metropolitan area. It put in a lot of work over the last few years to try and convince us that we should make a firm commitment to social housing.

FRAPRU, which has its head office in the riding of Laurier—Sainte-Marie, committed itself in a document in which it gives a very detailed profile of social housing in Quebec and Canada. FRAPRU, which deserves the admiration and support of parliamentarians, reminds us that there are three types of data in this document. One of them points very strongly to the fact that, in Quebec, never before have so many families had to spend so much on social housing—an alarming situation. About 40 per cent of families in Quebec are in this situation. Never have so many people in Canada, not only in Quebec, had to spend so much of their income in order to have a decent home. We are talking of about 1.2 million people.

It is with these data in mind that we thought it necessary, as the Official Opposition, to urge the government to make substantial efforts to invest in social housing. Indeed, we are worried. I admit that worry is part and parcel of politics, but we are nevertheless seriously concerned about the intentions of this government. And we are not the only ones, for that matter. May I remind you that FRAPRU and other organizations interested in housing met the minister last December and that on the basis of that meeting, they concluded that the minister had not committed himself seriously and strongly enough, to say the least, to championing this cause in Cabinet. What we have in terms of social housing is far from satisfactory and encouraging.

We have little available in terms of social housing. Since in politics the ability to remember is a very precious asset, we should recall that the member from Papineau—Saint-Michel, the present Deputy Prime Minister and other big names of the former Official Opposition had passionately called for the re-establishment, among other things—and I am giving here a very concrete example—of the national co-operative housing program that cost only \$6 million to the government. It is very little compared to overall government spending.

Some members in the Official Opposition thundered and talked with deep conviction about social housing, but indeed, they have quieted down since. I suppose that the fact that they have changed sides in the House explains their silence. The only thing that we are left with in terms of social housing is a program which is, to use parliamentary language, modest but you will understand that this is not really the word I would rather use. This program which addresses a very small proportion of the housing problem deals with renovation but not any kind of

renovation since it is open only to homeowners. As if the poor, as if people in our community who really need the government's assistance were homeowners!

(1745)

I believe that the government must maintain the program referred to since the beginning of this debate, but that this is largely insufficient. We are entitled, a few days away from the tabling of the budget—I hope we will not be disappointed—to expect that the government is going to re-establish the budgets approved in the past in the three sectors where one could, as a less fortunate member of society, expect to get some help in the social housing area.

What are the three programs which the federal and provincial governments jointly administered in the past? First, the National Co-operative Housing Program, which was very inexpensive for the government and had tremendous advantages. I will have an opportunity to come back to that. Second, the Income Supplement Program, which was a way to intervene on the rental market and to help people. The resources there were meagre, but they proved effective. Third, a more complex and more expensive low-cost housing program. Housing authorities in each municipality operate according to very specific rules. When one talks about low-cost housing, we all know here—because our television viewers know it—that this formula allows them to spend 25 p. 100 of their income in order to get a decent housing unit in which to live and to belong to a community from whom they are entitled to expect some help. And, as a general rule, support is available.

At the same time as the low-cost housing program, the federal government, with the provinces, had been assisting non-profit organizations that were dealing with a very specific clientele, mostly handicapped people, people losing their autonomy, ex-prisoners or people with AIDS. In the past, there was a program that allowed to help a very specific clientele.

So, at this time, even if we are being enthusiastic—I am not a pessimist by nature—we do not have much indication about the will of the government to act and to play a major role in these areas, still in co-operation with the provinces. You know that, on this side of the House, we will not forget that.

Why did we feel, as the Official Opposition, that we needed to be insistent? This has to do not only with the poverty issue. Indeed, we are concerned with it because we know that more and more people are getting poorer, but also because we believe—and that is the fundamental difference between us and our friends from the Reform Party. There are other differences, and I will not mention them, but this is certainly one of them. We are convinced that when you act in the social housing area, when there are public funds, when you make a budget, when you provide money to act in that area, you are being useful and you

*Supply*

contribute to the revitalization of the economy, because there is a return on your investment.

I could give you some compelling examples that would convince you. They do not come from me or from some partisan groups around the Bloc Québécois, but from people with expertise who know about the reality in the social housing area.

I will mention, first, the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada which conducted studies the findings of which I could hand out to the parliamentarians who are not yet convinced of the merits of government investments in social housing. I know I am not allowed to read in this House and I acknowledge having circumvented the rules on a number of occasions today, but I just want to bring to your attention four lines which clearly reflect the spin-offs of government investments in social housing.

Building 1,000 co-operative housing units, in terms of construction or renovation, would create lots of jobs, especially in the construction and manufacturing sectors. In the construction sector, over 2,000 jobs would be generated this way. Renovation projects generate less jobs, in fact about 800 jobs for every 1,000 housing units.

Therefore, I think it is fair to say that there are very few sectors in our society where you can claim that a government action would create and generate such great economic spin-offs as those identified by the Federation.

(1750)

In spite of it all, in spite of the fact that we are aware of those figures, in spite of the fact that, since last December, the FRAPRU and other pressure groups have continuously been making representations to the government, in spite of the fact that less than three months after this government came into office, stakeholders in social housing were already active, in spite of the fact that we made representations, we can see that the government, on the social housing issue, is timid, spineless and certainly not too daring.

It is sad. It is sad, because such an attitude fosters prejudices. And as you know, there is a lot of prejudice in our society. Such an attitude fosters preconceived ideas to the effect that the best government is one which governs little, while we know perfectly well that if the government was able to take its responsibilities and to allocate money, not necessarily a lot of it—some years, 35,000 co-op housing units were built in Canada—if only we could have maintained that rate, I think we could have built up a strong housing inventory. We could have succeeded in revitalizing perhaps not all but some urban areas which are deteriorating.

It is for that reason that we, in the Bloc Québécois, are making an urgent appeal to the minister. We do not have many government members with us today; nonetheless, we are making an urgent appeal, and we will not back down; we will keep at it and work on all fronts so that this government understands how

necessary it is to invest in social housing, not in the timid renovation program it is offering. It is an interesting beginning, a trial run, but we would be extremely disappointed, together with Quebecers and Canadians, if the government was to limit its action in the field of social housing to such a timid program.

There was talk about the economic spin-offs of social housing investments, but I would like to explain, from a social and human perspective, why we have to invest in social housing. I will start with a reality known to every member, I think, and that is the low-cost housing situation. If there is no change in the status quo in 1994–95–96, not one low-cost housing unit will be built.

This afternoon, we witnessed conflicting styles and genres. I heard the minister say, and he was quoted several times later, that the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation was going to invest \$35 million; every time a government member uttered that number, there was a sense of ecstasy. We must tell people who are listening that this \$35 million will not be used to build new units, if I am wrong I will take it back, but we checked and it appears that it will be used to pay the interests on the money borrowed to build the existing housing inventory. The basic truth that should not be forgotten is that not a single low-cost housing unit will be built if the Minister of Finance does not change the status quo.

Why is it that the low-cost housing units are so important? We could very well, you and I, end up in low-cost housing when we get to be 60 or 65. Why are they important? Because it is a form of community life. The people who live in such dwellings are not necessarily incapacitated. In any event there is no cafeteria in low-cost housing buildings. They are really only apartment buildings, but there are community rooms where residents get together to play cards or whatever. Any member of Parliament who is close to his constituents knows that there is a real community life in this type of housing. The lack of low-cost housing is sorely felt and we hope the government will be able to put the situation to right.

(1755)

As far as co-operatives are concerned we know their economic significance but we also know that those who are part of a co-operative are people who invest in society. Each of them has tasks to perform: paint the fence, take the garbage out, take charge of public relations with the neighbouring community. Those people give and receive and this is why that formula has become so popular.

In conclusion, we sincerely believe that if the present government, which in the past has associated liberalism with generosity, is serious and has a social conscience, I believe that the Minister of Public Works—we do not even call him Minister of Housing since housing is so low on the list of priorities—should march to the beat of a different drummer. He should be the social conscience of that government. He should not be afraid to stand

*Supply*

apart from his cabinet colleagues because that is what is expected of him.

Too often we are told that the Minister of Finance will decide. I say no. We must be able to count on the Minister of Public Works to act as an aggressive and uncompromising champion of social housing. Only when the minister, acting as the voice of the less privileged in terms of social housing, puts his foot down will the Minister of Finance act accordingly in his budget.

**Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to commend the member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve for his excellent and brilliant presentation.

Given the federal deficit which has now accumulated and exceeds \$500 billion, do you agree that this House should substantially increase the funding of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation or other related agencies in order to provide more low-income housing?

**Mr. Ménard:** Mr. Speaker, as René Lévesque said, facts are always more stubborn than the interpretation one gives them. I believe so, since the question was put that way; I think it would be good for the government to put more money into low-income housing. Other possibilities exist, which I did not have time to mention because I ran out of time.

In Montreal, there are four purchasing corporations. What are purchasing corporations? Perhaps the minister should come to Montreal and see. These purchasing corporations bring people together in a non-profit organization. They have some money—of course, they have help. They have been helped by the McGill Fund or by the people who probably haunted your childhood, the good Sisters of the Holy Cross. With this initial funding, they can take housing out of the speculative market, renovate it and then make it available to the community.

I believe that this is a promising approach for the future. I understand that the hon. member also wants to be this government's social conscience. Since he is a Montrealer, which pleases me, I think that we should convince the minister to come to Montreal and try out this approach and use it as a way for society to act in the market.

[*English*]

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona):** Mr. Speaker, I want to make a brief comment and perhaps ask the member a question.

First I want to make it absolutely clear that the New Democratic Party supports the notion that more rather than less needs to be spent on social housing, not just in Quebec but across the country. It is something we have always supported. In the past we have pressed previous governments to make a greater

commitment to social housing and were disturbed by the cuts in social housing made by the previous Conservative government.

I listened earlier to a Reform member of Parliament who asked a question of the Bloc Québécois member about what they would be prepared to give up and what would they be prepared to not spend money on in return for spending more money on social housing.

I do not want to presume to answer the question for the hon. member, however it seems to me that if we were looking for more money for social housing and for other social priorities one thing we could look at is the tax system.

I am reading an extensive article by Neil Brooks called "The Changing Structure of the Canadian Tax System, Accommodating the Rich". It is a very lengthy article in the Osgoode Hall Law Journal in the spring of 1992 and outlines the way in which the tax system has been changed over the last 10 years to accommodate the rich.

(1800)

One of the ways we could find that kind of money for social housing and for other things is to look at changing the tax system. One of the things that has been floated around in the last little while is trying to bring down the amount of money that people are able to put away to avoid taxation on through the use of RRSPs. I wonder what the position of the Bloc is on that.

It would seem to me that people who have \$13,000 left over to put into RRSPs and therefore avoid paying taxes on it are not the people who need social housing. Obviously a big gap exists between the people who benefit from this particular tax policy and the people who are in need of social housing.

It certainly would seem to me that some amelioration or a reduction of the amount that people are able to hide in this way might help to provide money on the other side for social purposes.

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** If the hon. member wishes to answer, he still has about four or five minutes left.

**Mr. Ménard:** Mr. Speaker, you are very generous.

In his question, the hon. member suggested an answer with which I wholeheartedly agree. I think our leader and my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois made it very clear, from the very beginning, that social justice, which is a main goal of ours, flows from tax reform, but not just any tax reform, and not necessarily one which will affect ordinary Canadians and low-income taxpayers. On a corporate level, we know about the tax avoidance devices available in Canada and also all the measures used by richer taxpayers.

*Supply*

I agree with the hon. member, but I cannot tell him that this is the position of my party, since it is the responsibility of our finance critic, the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, to do so. However, from what I understand, the hon. member is absolutely right in saying that RRSPs should be taxed according on a progressive scale. We are not talking here about a freelancer who puts \$1,000 in a RRSP, but rather about rich people who use this tax instrument. I would have absolutely no hesitation in saying that progressive taxation should apply to these rich people.

Thus, I do agree with most of what my colleague had to say, Mr. Speaker.

[English]

**Ms. Jean Augustine (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I have a working as well as a personal interest in the area of housing.

For several years I was chairperson of the Metro Toronto Housing Authority, MTHA as it is commonly known, the largest public housing agency in Canada. We house approximately 125,000 individuals in rent geared to income facilities. The majority of the MTHA stock was built in the 1950s and 1960s and was characterized by large scale projects targeted to low income households.

Through my work in housing and my contact with my constituents, I am aware there is a pressing need for affordable housing especially in the metropolitan Toronto area and in other urban areas. I am also aware of the aboriginal people and the pressing and critical need there is for housing in their areas.

In the early 1970s the Liberal government introduced community based non-profit and co-operative housing programs to better integrate socially assisted housing in all communities. To this end we took a different route from that taken by the United States. These new social housing programs were developed in partnership, with municipal, private, co-operative and non-profit housing corporations and were based on the tenets of self-help and volunteerism.

(1805)

I believe this progressive housing initiative by the Liberal government of the time greatly contributed to Canada's reputation as a country of relatively safe communities. Unlike the United States, Canada does not have abandoned inner city areas or communities teaming with homeless people. I fear, however, that this may change if the short sighted policies of the previous government are not reviewed.

Poverty in Canada's inner cities is on the rise and hundreds of thousands of people are living below the poverty line. The greatest proportion of their income goes toward rent, making them dependent on food banks and other forms of assistance. Since social housing makes up less than 6 per cent of Canada's

total housing stock, these low income households have no other choice but to rent private market housing.

The Conservative government had no interest in investing in social housing. During its time in office it chipped away at all social housing programs. Housing budgets and programs underwent drastic cuts and culminated in the cancellation of a good many programs.

The Conservative government did this despite the knowledge that one in eight households, ranging from the working poor to those with special needs, cannot afford its housing or is in an inadequate or substandard dwelling. The cancellation of social housing programs made the chances for these households getting housing assistance equivalent to winning a lottery.

We have a different scene now. In our red book we said that the Liberal government wanted to support local communities as the source of social stability and economic strength. Canada's social housing programs go a long way in meeting these goals. We realize on this side of the House, as does everyone in the House, that adequate shelter is a fundamental need of society and a prerequisite for community prosperity.

Our government is committed to rebuilding community well-being and restoring individual dignity. We will do this by helping to house Canadians in affordable, suitable and adequate shelter. Our commitment in maintaining a strong role in housing is clear and we have made this clear. We have expressed this in several avenues. We will continue to fund and support the 652,000 households at approximately \$2 billion per year.

The need for adequate housing for all Canadians is a very serious issue. The federal government recently in the throne speech reaffirmed the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program. A total of \$100 million over the next two years will be available to help low income households bring their homes up to health and safety standards.

I know of this concern and this need for government to achieve efficiency and savings in delivering an acceptable level of service to Canadians. We want to do this in the most cost effect manner.

I was made to understand that CMHC has already begun to discuss direct lending to finance and refinance social housing projects as one way of making better use of resources and reducing expenditures. We expect to save some \$120 million in subsidy costs over the next four years, providing scope for new housing initiatives.

We need to develop additional ideas, invigorating, inspiring and creative ideas. Those ideas can come from all sides of the House.

(1810)

The need to combine cost effectiveness as has been mentioned over and over goes along with creativity in our funding approaches. We must combine creativity and funding approaches

to meet the theme which is needed and echoed on this side of the House.

The provinces and the federal government had a meeting. They came away with a sense of co-operation and a resolution that together they must provide the hard working taxpayer a return for the dollar. This is why we must work together to achieve efficiencies and savings and to address overlap and duplication.

The federal and provincial ministers of housing will be meeting at a summer conference. It is hoped the co-operation we have started in working with our provincial counterparts will be exemplified there. They will be working not only on strategies as to the cost effectiveness and efficiency of administering the existing social housing portfolio but also will be discussing the partnership required to meet the needs.

Efficiencies can be realized in the operating costs. A few examples are: improved energy efficiencies; streamlining the professional fees such as audit and legal fees, et cetera, that are done in the social housing field; reducing property and liability insurance costs; and bulk purchasing of goods and services. All those avenues offer excellent opportunities and potential for savings.

We need to build in a spirit of co-operation and partnership. We need to renew our thinking for the nineties, to find new and creative ways to meet the need before us as a country, a need facing all Canadians but especially those for whom social housing is the only answer. We need to consider innovative ways. We need to look outside our existing structures.

As Canadians we offer much to the world. I have participated in international conferences where as Canadians we stood up and participated on a level way above what a number of other countries presently involved were doing.

Partnerships among levels of government in Canada have historically worked well. They will continue to work well as long as there is co-operation within the federation. With our current fiscal reality we need to continue to do this and do it even better. Existing partnerships must be reviewed to determine how we can put them together to benefit not only the housing market but also for the jobs that could be provided in that area.

Creative new funding opportunities must include the third sector contribution, charitable organizations and all those involved in the area of meeting the housing needs of Canadians.

Housing policy can no longer be considered as something by itself isolated in a vacuum, the responsibility of a government agency, body or ministry. It cannot simply be measured in terms of public expenditures. It must be linked to other public policies

### *Supply*

and co-ordinated with them to get the most from available resources.

It is very important on this side of the House that as we speak about the ideals of what the 21st century offers to us, as we begin to review the needs of Canadians, as we begin to look at our entire social security system, that we see social housing as a very important part of that discussion.

(1815)

Today's topic is timely. The input from members today will go into the discussion that will and must occur as we move forward. This type of thinking reflects what is already occurring in a number of provinces.

Demonstration projects are now under way in New Brunswick, British Columbia and other provinces. They are looking at income supplements to enable welfare recipients to enter the workforce and become self-sufficient. The emphasis is on training and education and finding jobs for those able to work.

These programs stress enabling individuals to overcome barriers to personal development and employment. It enhances their dignity and self-reliance to compete in the job market. We need to involve others to focus their energies, resources and creativity in developing solutions to housing problems.

I worked quite closely with individuals in my last occupation as chair of metro housing in the empowerment of individuals. Residents had a say on the issues that dealt with their quality of life in the places in which they lived.

I look forward to building on this spirit of co-operation as we extend the provision of housing to all Canadians in need, as we look at the innovative and cost effective ways in which we can provide housing for all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie):** Mr. Speaker, I realize my colleague shares many of our concerns about social housing. I praise her for that. It reminds me of a debate during the election campaign with, among others, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and member for Papineau—Saint-Michel, a Montreal riding, when we both held the same views and criticized the Conservative government policies cutting all subsidies for co-operative housing.

We had met the same groups between 1990 and 1993 and signed the same petitions to support all those who are involved in, promote and manage co-operative housing. My question to the hon. member is this: Did the government confirm in the throne speech, without my knowledge, its promise to reinstate the co-operative housing program? I may be wrong, but it was in the red book. The throne speech is silent on this matter, although both Liberals and Bloc members criticized Conservative policies. Liberals promised time and again that when they came



*Supply*

into office they would reinstate the co-operative housing program.

Maybe I missed something, but I am sure they will be true to their promise and a decision has already been made. I did not see it, but I would like my hon. colleague to tell me when that decision was made and where it is to be found in the throne speech. Maybe it will be announced in the Minister of Finance's budget speech next Tuesday. I would really like to be better informed.

[English]

**Ms. Augustine:** Mr. Speaker, I wish I knew what was in next Tuesday's budget, but in fairness and in response to the member's question I just want to confirm what was said earlier.

We are committed to job creation. We recognize that housing and everything relating to housing is a stimulus to job creation. We are committed to ensuring that Canadian society functions. We are committed to helping people in needy situations. We are committed to responding to the needs of people who find themselves in difficult situations especially in our urban areas where there are waiting lists of thousands of people who require housing. There is a commitment to respond to those needs.

(1820)

We have committed timelines and deadlines to some of the programs. We have committed to CMHC. We mentioned what we will do in the area of the aboriginal and the dollars we will spend in that area. We talked about our commitment and support to the national strategy for the integration of persons with disabilities. It is there. It is within our commitment to ensure our support. We will ensure that Canadian society and those who require assistance will be so afforded.

We have talked about how many dollars, where we are going with all of this. We spoke about partnerships. We talked about working together. The whole business of the co-operative movement is a partnership. There is support for this and I know that the minister is committed to ensuring that together with the finance minister he can come up with some alternatives.

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat):** Mr. Speaker, it is a fact that when the state gets heavily involved in housing there is less incentive for private landlords to build housing units. This means less housing overall and higher rents, which only hurts low income Canadians.

Does the government consider these secondary but very real effects in considering how to approach this problem?

**Ms. Augustine:** Mr. Speaker, there is full knowledge on the part of everyone involved in the housing industry as well as everyone on this side of the House. We recognize that we have a responsibility and it is a partnership.

We are also fully aware of what happens in the market. We have seen over the last while with the increase in prices what has happened to those that are neediest and those for whom the state has to provide some assistance. We have seen the homeless in our midst growing. That reality is there in terms of the push and the pull in the market and the support that is given.

We have again campaigned on job creation. We recognize that housing starts and the housing market have to go hand in hand with the promise of job creation.

[Translation]

**Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa):** Mr. Speaker, in my riding, Bourassa, in Montreal North, the housing situation is tragic: 42 per cent of tenants spend more than 30 per cent of their income on housing; 73 per cent of the 90,000 residents of Montreal North are tenants. Of these 90,000 residents, 22 per cent are women who spend more than half of their income on housing. This is the highest percentage in all of Quebec. The situation is alarming.

Yesterday, the Organisation populaire des droits sociaux de Montréal-Nord and the Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain gave a press conference. During the election campaign, I visited many co-operatives. The people were very worried following the subsidy cuts in funding made when the Conservative government was in power. There are also many minorities in my riding.

I would like to ask my hon. friend if special measures are planned to protect the right to housing of minorities, particularly of visible minorities.

[English]

**Ms. Augustine:** Mr. Speaker, the question of protection for minority individuals is important. I will say that there is, and I am speaking on a personal note, as far as I can see. The co-ops and co-op programs through which individuals can put together through their community a request and build and house themselves as a result of their own activity are parts of the continuing program. There are special avenues. I can talk about several communities in which efforts are made to empower individuals to participate in the communities in which they live and to be very much an integrated part of their communities.

(1825)

In this country we do not have areas in which minorities or various groups take residential patterns because this is the only place in which they can live. Therefore all programs are open equally to everyone regardless of race, colour, nationality, creed, length of stay of Canada, et cetera. The programs for those individuals are really empowering programs to help them to be partners in programs of co-operation where individuals have a sense of belonging, a quality of life, and are able to participate freely in society.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Paul Marchand (Québec-Est):** Mr. Speaker, I really appreciated the comments of the hon. member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore. I understood, from her remarks, that she really cares about social housing, all the more so since she was director of the largest social housing complex in Toronto for a while. She even said, and I quote: “Adequate shelter is a fundamental right”. It is a concern that we share, of course.

However, there is a lot of confusion on the government’s part because, even with all the nice principles being laid out, the good intentions and the rhetoric, it seems that we cannot find out what the government really thinks about this issue. A while ago, someone asked if the government was willing to implement a social housing construction program, and we got no answer. Also, when I put a question to the Minister of Public Works, he could not tell me if he is opposed to rent increases for social housing units.

I would ask the hon. member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore if she would agree to rent increases for social housing units in order to pay for the construction of more units.

[English]

**Ms. Augustine:** Mr. Speaker, it is a very legitimate question and one that is usually asked. There are several ways, especially in the area of public housing, where 20 per cent or 30 per cent is used as a ratio and is referred to as meeting the needs of individuals who are caught in that socioeconomic situation.

The increase in rent in the province of Ontario is an example. We know there is some control in that specific area. Are we talking about people who are in deep core need? Are we talking about people who are paying market rent? Are we talking about the present situation of the market as it is today? Are we talking about the needs of individuals to get into housing as a result of the size of their families?

When we ask a question about rent and speak about people in social housing there are a number of things it is important to take into consideration.

**Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest):** Mr. Speaker, I will try to make my comments in two minutes and leave one minute for a response.

I have listened to much of this debate today. I want to make it absolutely clear that there are many people in the Reform Party who believe strongly in the need for social housing. We understand that decent housing is the cornerstone of many families. It is the first real step many families take to work themselves out of poverty. We have to be thinking in terms of the children, not of the adults, in terms of the potential of the children to have firm, consistent roots from which they can grow into adults.

### Supply

We still have to pay the bills. We as a Parliament have to set priorities. We have to decide where we can spend money, where we can get money and where we can allocate it. In my view there are probably very few areas of spending that we could define that should have a higher priority than housing, particularly for the poor and also for single parents who are primarily female.

The problem is that somehow we have to make these projects self-liquidating. We have to ensure that the social housing projects do not all gravitate to one geographical area. They need to be spread out through the community so that we do not get blocks of high income and low income. We should be able to spread them out through the community.

The co-op programs we have work very well—

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 6.30 p.m., it is my duty to inform the House that pursuant to Standing Order 81(19) proceedings on the motion have expired.

[Translation]

\* \* \*

### PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND FIXED LINK

The House resumed from February 15 consideration of the motion.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 6.30 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 45(5)(a), it is my duty to put forthwith all questions necessary to dispose of government order No. 7.

Call in the members.

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 5)

### YEAS

#### Members

Alcock	Anderson
Arseneault	Assad
Assadourian	Asselin
Augustine	Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre)
Bachand	Baker
Barnes	Beaunier
Bellehumeur	Bellemare
Berger	Bergeron
Bernier (Beauce)	Bertrand
Bethel	Bevilacqua
Bhaduria	Blondin—Andrew
Bodnar	Bonin
Bouchard	Boudria
Brien	Brown (Oakville—Milton)
Brushett	Bryden
Bélair	Bélisle
Calder	Campbell
Cannis	Caron
Catterall	Cauchon
Chamberlain	Chan
Chrétien (Frontenac)	Chrétien (Saint—Maurice)
Clancy	Cohen
Collenette	Collins
Cowling	Crawford
Crête	Culbert
Dalphond—Guiral	Davault
de Savoye	Deshais
DeVillers	Dhaliwal
Dingwall	Discepolo
Dromisky	Dubé
Duceppe	Dumas

*Supply*

Dupuy  
 Eggleton  
 Fewchuk  
 Finestone  
 Flis  
 Gaffney  
 Gagnon (Québec)  
 Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier)  
 Gerrard  
 Gray (Windsor West)  
 Guarnieri  
 Guimond  
 Harvard  
 Hopkins  
 Ianno  
 Jackson  
 Keyes  
 Kirkby  
 Lalonde  
 Langlois  
 Laurin  
 Lavigne (Verdun—Saint-Paul)  
 Leblanc (Longueuil)  
 Lefebvre  
 Leroux (Shefford)  
 Loubier  
 MacDonald  
 MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys)  
 Malhi  
 Manley  
 Marchi  
 Martin (LaSalle—Émard)  
 McCormick  
 McKinnon  
 McTeague  
 Milliken  
 Minna  
 Murphy  
 Ménard  
 Nunez  
 O'Brien  
 Parrish  
 Payne  
 Peters  
 Phinney  
 Pillitteri  
 Pomerleau  
 Reed  
 Richardson  
 Robichaud  
 Rock  
 Scott (Fredericton—York Sudbury)  
 Shepherd  
 Simmons  
 St. Denis  
 Stewart (Brant)  
 Szabo  
 Terrana

Easter  
 English  
 Fillion  
 Finlay  
 Fry  
 Gagliano  
 Gallaway  
 Gauthier (Roberval)  
 Godfrey  
 Grose  
 Guay  
 Harb  
 Hickey  
 Hubbard  
 Iftody  
 Jacob  
 Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)  
 Knutson  
 Landry  
 Lastewka  
 Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry)  
 Lebel  
 Lee  
 Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe)  
 Loney  
 MacAulay  
 MacLaren (Etobicoke North/Nord)  
 Maheu  
 Maloney  
 Marchand  
 Marleau  
 Massé  
 McGuire  
 McLellan (Edmonton Northwest)  
 Mifflin  
 Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)  
 Mitchell  
 Murray  
 Nault  
 Nunziata  
 Ouellet  
 Patry  
 Peric  
 Peterson  
 Picard (Drummond)  
 Plamondon  
 Proud  
 Regan  
 Ringuette—Maltais  
 Rocheleau  
 Rompkey  
 Serré  
 Sheridan  
 Skoke  
 Steckle  
 Stewart (Northumberland)  
 Telegdi  
 Thalheimer

Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata)  
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 Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing)  
 Blaikie  
 Breitreuz (Yorkton—Melville)  
 Brown (Calgary Southeast)  
 Cummins  
 Epp  
 Frazer  
 Grey (Beaver River)  
 Hanger  
 Harper (Calgary West)  
 Hayes  
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 Hill (Prince George—Peace River)  
 Jennings  
 Manning  
 McClelland (Edmonton Southwest)  
 Mills (Red Deer)  
 Penson  
 Riis  
 Robinson  
 Silye  
 Solomon  
 Stinson  
 Taylor  
 White (Fraser Valley West)

**PAIRED MEMBERS**

## Members

Bakopanos  
 Canuel  
 Debieu  
 LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso)

Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead)  
 Copps  
 Goodale  
 Tremblay (Rosemont)

*[Translation]*

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

It being seven o'clock, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at ten o'clock a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7 p.m.)

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