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Friday, April 22, 1994

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, April 22, 1994

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

CROWN LIABILITY AND PROCEEDINGS ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-4, an act to amend the Crown Liability and Proceedings Act, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

Hon. Fernand Robichaud (for the Minister of Justice) moved that the bill be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to.)

Mr. Robichaud (for the Minister of Justice) moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Mac Harb (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise today to participate in the third reading debate on this bill, an act to amend the Crown Liability and Proceedings Act.

This legislation ensures that trade sanctions cannot be taken against Canada under the North American free trade agreement on environmental co-operation or the North American agreement on labour co-operation.

Bill C-4 is the only legislative measure necessary for Canada to fulfil our obligations under these agreements.

[*Translation*]

These agreements improve the NAFTA provisions on the environment and labour. They guarantee that our objective to increase trade is not achieved at the expense of our environment and our workers.

If adopted, this legislation would guarantee that trade sanctions cannot be taken against Canada in connection with environmental or labour matters covered by NAFTA.

[*English*]

Thanks to this bill, any potential fines made against Canada by a panel will be enforced by our own domestic courts.

If Canada, the United States or Mexico fail to enforce their environmental and labour laws, the agreements contain an effective dispute settlement mechanism. It allows for the establishment of a panel to investigate and make a determination.

If a panel determines a country has demonstrated a persistent pattern of failure to enforce its law, it may require the offending country to adopt an action plan to correct the problems. If the country fails to do so, the panel could also impose a fine or what the agreement terms a monetary enforcement assessment.

(1005)

The legislation before us today will permit the Federal Court of Canada to enforce any panel determination which may be made against Canada if, and only if we persistently fail to effectively enforce our environmental and labour laws. Of course that is not something we expect to ever happen.

If a dispute settlement panel levies fines against the United States or Mexico for failure to correct their enforcement problems, those countries will face a suspension of NAFTA benefit or trade sanctions equivalent to the size of the unpaid penalty.

Canada views such trade sanctions would constitute barriers of the very kind that the NAFTA was designed to eliminate.

These agreements protect Canada's environmental and labour interests in relation to the North American free trade agreement. They effectively strengthen and expand important commitments made by Canada, the United States and Mexico.

[*Translation*]

We are committed to helping to promote environmentally sustainable growth and to promoting workers' rights throughout North America.

[*English*]

Through the North American agreement on environmental co-operation we have created a commission to effect close and ongoing co-operation. For example, on March 23 the Minister of the Environment participated in the inaugural meeting of the commission in Vancouver with her counterparts from the United States and Mexico.

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The ministers at that time approved a process to establish the commission and the co-operative work program for the first year. They agreed that the commission's activities will be conducted in an open and transparent manner.

The environment ministers from Canada, the United States and Mexico will oversee the work of the commission to ensure it meets its goals; to promote sustainable development, to develop and enforce environmental regulations and to resolve disputes if laws are not upheld.

The commission will promote a work plan based on areas of priority. They include limits on specific pollutants, assessments of projects with transboundary implications and reciprocal court access. As well, the commission will work with the free trade commission to achieve the environmental goals of the NAFTA agreement.

Steady progress has been made on the establishment of the labour commission formed under the North American agreement on labour co-operation. Also on March 21 in Washington the Minister of Human Resources Development met with his American and Mexican counterparts to establish the co-operative work plan of the labour commission.

The ministers discussed how they intend to achieve the objectives of the labour agreement and reviewed a number of practical measures related to the establishment of the commission's organizational structure. At that time they reiterated their commitment to work together on a program of trilateral co-operative activities.

The labour commission will give effect to the promise in the preamble to the North American free trade agreement to "improve conditions and living standards" and as well "to protect, enhance and enforce basic workers' rights". The agreement, founded on close and ongoing co-operation among the three countries, ensures that laws governing health and safety, child labour and minimum wage standards are upheld.

They go well beyond co-operation. They commit each country to the domestic enforcement of domestic environmental and labour laws. This means that no country may use lax enforcement of its laws to gain an unfair arrangement or trade advantage.

I can report that negotiations to work out federal-provincial arrangements on implementing the environment and labour agreements in Canada are proceeding on a co-operative and constructive footing.

(1010)

These agreements are designed to protect the environment and workers' rights, important issues for the provinces. Canada will submit to its NAFTA partners a list of provinces participat-

ing in the agreement when negotiations with the provinces have been completed.

It is my firm belief that the North American free trade agreement has been considerably strengthened and improved as a result of the precedent setting side agreement. The government is satisfied that the NAFTA will advance Canadian trade policy objectives.

As well the agreement will provide a valuable incentive for Canadian producers, exporters and investors to look beyond their traditional backyards to Mexico and the rest of Latin America as well as to the markets of Europe and Asia.

The agreement as strengthened and improved illustrates that international trade agreements can be multifaceted and more attuned to the realities of the 1990s.

It is in Canada's best interests to proceed with the passage of this bill. Not only will it protect Canada's international trade interest but also our environmental goals and the rights of our workers.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-4, an act to amend the Crown Liability and Proceedings Act. Notwithstanding its vague and somewhat misleading title, this is a relatively simple bill. It refers to the so-called side agreements to the North American free trade agreement.

On March 15, in the debate on the Canadian foreign policy review process, I commented as follows, and I quote:

It is important to point out that this globalization is an inescapable phenomenon. It is a tendency which affects the economy of all countries, whether they are G-7 members or developing nations. To try to escape this reality would be like ignoring the emergence of new means of communication and production; in other words, it would be tantamount to ignoring the changes that have occurred in our economic environment.

I also stated the following:

—trade liberalization and market globalization seem to be a trend, an irreversible phenomenon. The prosperity of nations will depend more and more on international trade. It is a fact that will be part of Canada's economic reality from now on.

It is therefore not surprising that developments took us so quickly from the initial signing of the free trade agreement between Canada and the United States to the signing of the North American free trade agreement.

I was in Washington yesterday with several Canadian colleagues to meet members of the U.S. steel caucus and to discuss the need for our governments to provide formal recognition of the fact that the North American steel market is already well on its way to being integrated.

We also had an opportunity to meet representatives of the Canadian and U.S. steel industry who shared with us their concerns and expectations.

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Representatives of the American Iron and Steel Institute, which includes most Canadian, American and Mexican steel mills, gave us, for our information, a press release published on July 8, 1992, in which the North American Steel Council, which is a member of the American Iron and Steel Institute, explained its position on NAFTA.

One paragraph of this press release was about the concerns shared by all members of the American Iron and Steel Institute, and I would like to read this very briefly, if I may, Mr. Speaker.

[*English*]

“On the interplay between the NAFTA and the environment the NASC’s Canadian, Mexican and U.S. members share common concerns. We support continued parallel talks by our governments on environmental standards and enforcement levels, as well as on other so-called social issues as worker health and safety standards”.

[*Translation*]

Reflecting the concerns shared by a substantial part of the U.S. public, U.S. President Bill Clinton made a commitment to negotiate and conclude side agreements on these two items before NAFTA was passed by Congress. After hasty negotiations, the three partners on September 14, 1993, signed two parallel agreements to NAFTA: the North American agreement on environmental co-operation between the governments of Canada, the United States and Mexico, and the North American agreement on labor co-operation, between the same three governments.

(1015)

These side agreements gave rise to two new international institutions, namely the commission for environmental co-operation and the commission for labor co-operation.

Incidentally, several days ago, the government announced that the NAFTA commission for environmental co-operation would be established in Montreal. The English-language media and some other interested parties immediately criticized the government’s choice, although it was quite logical and justified.

Need we repeat that Quebec is the only Canadian province which has promised to endorse the parallel accords on labour and the environment—but only, I wish to point out—after serious negotiations between Quebec and Ottawa?

The reasons that Quebec wants so much to be at the leading edge of international trade practices could not be more obvious: Quebec exports almost 16 per cent of its \$160 billion GDP and these exports account for 30 per cent of our jobs. Furthermore, 76 per cent of Quebec’s exports go to the United States.

Establishing the commission in a place that is hostile to its purpose would certainly not make for efficient operation. In addition, the government’s choice is justified because Montreal is an international city which is already home to some 30 international organizations, including ICAO and IATA. The various levels of government have made great efforts to attract international organizations to Montreal.

Finally, Montreal is a cosmopolitan city which has the infrastructure needed for such organizations. It has a large English-speaking community and Spanish is increasingly spoken there every day by a rapidly growing Hispanic community.

For all these reasons and many more, Quebec’s business community and politicians were right to lobby hard to have the commission for environmental co-operation located in Montreal.

That said, I do not intend to say any more on the commission for environmental co-operation and the commission for labor co-operation than Bill C-4 itself does.

To see what this bill is all about, it is first of all necessary to put it in perspective. It then becomes apparent that it partially meets some very worthy overall objectives, since it ultimately seeks to protect the rights of our working people as well as our natural sites and our environment.

As I said earlier, Bill C-4 seeks to make effective in Canada the provisions contained in the parallel accords concluded by the three NAFTA signatory countries on labour and the environment. As a document prepared by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade for members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade says, these parallel accords encourage cooperation between Canada, the United States and Mexico on the environment and labour; commit the parties to promote compliance with and enforcement of their environmental and labour laws and regulations; and advocate higher standards in these two areas.

For at least two centuries, workers in Quebec and Canada have fought for laws to protect themselves from abuse by employers and governments. These struggles were hard and at times bitter. Nevertheless, workers succeeded in having their rights entrenched in laws which, in a sense, are now an integral part of life in Quebec and Canada; however, such is not the case in all countries. For social or historic reasons, workers’ rights have not advanced at the same rate and in the same way everywhere.

Need we add that this is also true of the environment, where the gains made are even more fragile? Indeed, although the progress made in labour relations is fairly well established, this is certainly not true of environmental protection, where too often and even recently we have seen governments bow to the laws of the market, to the detriment of the laws of nature.

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(1020)

At any rate, at the 1992 earth summit, there was certainly no great show of unfailing willingness on the part of NAFTA partners to work together to solve their environmental problems. Under no circumstances must trade agreements between countries, however substantial they may be, adversely affect either the vested rights of our workers or our environment.

I am convinced however that certain fly-by-night businesses have tried to use the elimination of trade barriers to explain to their workers and the authorities the relaxation of labour and biophysical environment protection standards.

That is why the NAFTA side deals provide for mechanisms ultimately intended, on the one hand, to prevent businesses from taking advantage of legal differences between countries and, on the other hand, to force governments to maintain and enforce existing legislation and, ideally, encourage the various countries to pass legislation that is yet more progressive and stringent. Any downgrading of working conditions and labour standards will not be tolerated by the Bloc Québécois, nor by the people of Quebec and Canada.

Of course, the temptation is there to restore a number of trade barriers or at least to adopt once again a negative attitude toward free trade as an easy way to solve the problem. And some provincial governments seem to like the idea. However, neither the current federal government nor the Bloc Québécois, nor the government of Quebec for that matter, consider that approach to be realistic or beneficial.

For now, Bill C-4 appears to be a step toward the ultimate goal of preventing environmental and social "dumping" in cases where trading partners are on a very unequal footing in economic and legislative terms. Note that such an approach has created pitfalls that governments must avoid at all costs, but I will comment on that later on.

Bill C-4 enables a panel, an arbitration panel convened under article 24 of the environmental co-operation agreement or article 29 of the labor co-operation agreement to require either partner to effectively enforce its own environmental or labour laws.

Panel determinations will have the same status as an order of the Federal Court. As indicated in the explanatory notes, the enactment of Bill C-4 "amends the Crown Liability and Proceedings Act so as to permit domestic enforcement by the Federal Court of Canada of any panel determination that is addressed to the Crown in right of Canada", should the latter fail to enforce its environmental or labour legislation.

In other words, Bill C-4 is a step in the right direction in that it prevents the legislative gap between the three NAFTA signatories from widening further. If Canadian businesses decide to set up abroad, it will not be in hope of benefiting from some relaxation of environmental standards or of being able to exploit a poorly protected labour force. The contrary is also possible, but the chances of that happening are much slimmer, believe me.

Mr. Speaker, as you can see, the disparity between our three countries' social and environmental standards is in no way expected to increase as a result of such a measure. On the contrary, under article 3 of each side deal, the three signatory states agree to improve and strengthen existing legislation. In the event of non-compliance, the panel may assess the party in default, through an order of the Federal Court, a fine of up to \$20 million US. The United States and Mexico could even have trade sanctions taken against them, while no such sanctions can be taken against Canada or any of its provinces under the agreement.

All in all, however, I would say that the positive aspects of this bill tend to eclipse the less positive ones. The first of these not-so-positive aspects of this middle-of-the-road solution that Canada has given its support to is no doubt the fact that the side deals have achieved no significant reduction in the observable legislative differences between the three NAFTA partners with respect to environment and labour.

This means that businesses could be tempted to take advantage of the fact that, in many cases, our trading partners' standards are more flexible than ours.

(1025)

Admittedly, all parties expressed their willingness to improve their legislation, but this expression of faith, although noted in the agreement and seemingly sincere, is no guarantee whatsoever that positive changes will in fact occur.

Moreover, we are all becoming better acquainted with the legendary propensity of our neighbours to the South to turn to the courts at the slightest little thing. Following the signing of the free trade agreement, Canadians were surprised indeed to see the Americans rush to the trade tribunals, apparently to tie them up with business as quickly as possible. Since they have not been shy about doing so since the implementation of the free trade agreement, there is reason to think that they will adopt the same course of action, if at all possible, in the case of the NAFTA and its side agreements.

Therefore, it is vitally important that we make our partners understand that this kind of practice is totally unacceptable. Special groups that hand down binding decisions must not become, quite involuntarily at that, institutions at the service of one NAFTA partner or another.

Another of the problems caused by these side agreements has to do with the unique features of Canadian federalism. Regardless of what this centralist government may believe, labour and environment are largely areas of provincial jurisdiction.

While Ottawa disregarded Quebec's willingness to negotiate agreements in the case of the free trade agreement, it is hardly in a position here to take a similar approach in the case of side agreements. Discussions are in progress right now between federal and Quebec officials. According to the information we have received thus far, these discussions appear to be moving along well.

The same apparently cannot be said for the other provinces. From the very beginning, Ontario and British Columbia have made no secret of their opposition to all side agreements. To show its discontent, Ontario has threatened on several occasions to ask the Supreme Court to declare the government's actions in this matter unconstitutional.

Side agreements which for now apply only in areas of federal jurisdiction are not likely to apply to all provinces equally anytime soon.

If our partners did not understand the nature, or should I say the confused nature, of the Canadian federation, well now is certainly their chance to get a clearer picture of the situation. Although they have expressly stated that they would like the federal government to conclude agreements with the provinces, their wish does not seem to have been universally heard.

Regardless, Mr. Speaker, we will enthusiastically support this bill in view of the arguments presented and the underlying principles which gave rise to it.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, today we are taking a last look at Bill C-4 as it gets third reading.

This bill was introduced by the government on January 26 and I spoke to it at length a few days later. At that time I said the Reform Party supported this bill although we did have some concerns about there being fair representation on the panel. We also wondered whether there should be an appeal process. These concerns were addressed to our satisfaction in committee.

I can now say that I and the Reform Party fully support this bill which will bring into Canadian law an enforcement mechanism established under the NAFTA side agreements on environmental and labour co-operation.

In the area of environmental co-operation we will be assured that there will be strengthened environmental co-operation in North America. We will be assured of sustainable development on a continental basis and of effective compliance with domestic and environmental law.

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In the area of labour co-operation we look forward to improved working conditions and living standards in Canada, the United States and Mexico, and the protection, enhancement and enforcement of basic workers' rights.

The trade pacts we have signed recently are of crucial importance to Canada since they help us gain better access to foreign markets. The sooner we get these trade pacts implemented the better.

Naturally there will be irritants as these agreements become operational. These will have to be addressed as they come up and I am confident they will do so.

We are doing the right thing by passing the bill quickly and moving on with the implementation of NAFTA. However there is still much work for the government to do to make it possible for business to take advantage of these trade opportunities.

The most important one is to reduce government spending so that we can eventually begin to lower taxes in Canada, which is among the highest taxed countries in the industrial world.

The second one is to eliminate the many interprovincial trade barriers that exist in Canada. I know these trade barriers are being discussed among federal and provincial governments now. I urge these governments to move quickly and without hesitation in these areas.

We are making great strides in securing our prosperity by making trade deals abroad. Let us see whether we have the same resolve to make the same breakthrough at home.

Canada is a trading nation. We support the bill and hope that we will benefit from the many opportunities this trade deal brings to Canadians.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed.)

[Translation]

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Mr. Robichaud: Mr. Speaker, I think you will find that there is unanimous consent to suspend the sitting of the House until the Question Period, at eleven o'clock, and then after the Routine Proceedings, to go on directly to Private Members' Business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The House has heard the motion from the hon. Secretary of State. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 10.32 a.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

The House resumed at 11 a.m.

*S. O. 31***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS***[English]***LINDSAY KINSMEN BAND**

Mr. John O'Reilly (Victoria—Haliburton): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to salute the 40th anniversary of the Lindsay Kinsmen Band. Formed in the spring of 1954 by Lloyd McMullen and Muriel and Earl Kennedy, the band has become part of the history of the town. It has touched the lives of thousands of young men and women who pursued a musical career in the town of Lindsay and formed a lasting tie to the community.

Furthermore, the band has distinguished itself with appearances at various national and international fairs and exhibits, including the Calgary Stampede, the New York World's Fair, Expo 67 and the 1970 Klondike Days in Edmonton. It has been said that at each place it visited it left a lasting impression.

There are now 54 enthusiastic members of this band and they proudly carry on the spirit of past bandmasters, drum majors, teachers and members.

I salute the parents who have spent countless hours of their time with the band. I ask all MPs to wish success and a happy 40th birthday to the Lindsay Kinsmen Band.

* * *

*[Translation]***VOLUNTEERS**

Mr. Bernard St-Laurent (Manicouagan): Mr. Speaker, in my speeches, I often compare volunteers to the blood running through our veins: they are everywhere, and they are needed in any well-organized society.

The contribution of these men and women to our society is invaluable. From the most sensitive gestures in the most tragic moments to fanatically determined support in highly committed organizations, volunteers have their place everywhere.

As far back in time as we can go, we see that all major mass movements resulted from the actions of volunteers. Whether we are talking about political action, consumers' associations or humanitarian organizations, we find volunteerism in the background.

Congratulations to all volunteers. What would our world be without you? I wish all volunteers an enjoyable week.

*[English]***HIBERNIA**

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, the revelation this morning that the Hibernia project is \$1 billion over budget and one year behind schedule comes as no surprise to industry insiders.

The Hibernia project will be typical of economic development projects promoted and financed by government for political reasons rather than economic reasons.

This project has already consumed \$1 billion in direct subsidies and almost \$2 billion in loan guarantees by Canadian taxpayers, added to which is the taxpayers' \$85 million share of the current overrun plus their liability for the 70 per cent share of Petro-Canada. Clearly Gulf Canada made a wise business decision to take its loss and pull out of this project two years ago.

With the proposed start-up date still four years away, how many more tax dollars will be dumped into this misguided effort to promote job creation in Newfoundland?

* * *

CANADA'S SENIORS

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, Canada's seniors, like all of us, were concerned to hear this week of the need to tap into the Canada Pension Plan surplus.

They would like to be reassured that they will continue to enjoy independent retirement living after paying into the pension system for decades. Perhaps more than any other group, seniors understand the need for sound fiscal management by governments. They do not want their children and grandchildren to inherit a legacy of debt.

That is why seniors associations such as One Voice would like to be part of the government's consultation process on a range of issues from budgetary policy to the renewal of Canada's social security system. Theirs, after all, is the voice of accumulated wisdom.

Now more than ever Parliament stands to benefit from the insight of our nation's seniors as we work to create a Canada rich with opportunity for all generations.

* * *

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Don Valley North): Mr. Speaker, I stand today to remember and pay tribute to 1.5 million Armenian men, women and children who were killed in the first major genocide of the 20th century, planned and executed by the government of Turkey on April 24, 1915 as a brutal final solution to the Armenian question.

My parents were not spared this tremendous suffering the Turkish government inflicted on so many individuals. As a result, like so many thousands of other Armenians, they were eventually forced to flee their homeland, leaving behind all their belongings.

As a citizen of Canada I wish to take this moment and condemn this unforgivable act of human aggression and ethnic cleansing.

(1105)

Similarly I call upon the Government of Canada to recognize and condemn the Armenian genocide and formally request the Turkish government to assume responsibility for this atrocity once and for all as Germany did for the six million Jews in World War II.

In conclusion, I ask all MPs to join their fellow Canadians of Armenian descent at a demonstration on Parliament Hill on Sunday, April 24 at 12.30 p.m.

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[Translation]

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Mr. Dan McTeague (Ontario): Mr. Speaker, this year, Armenians throughout the world commemorate the 79th anniversary of the painful events of 1915 that took two million of their compatriots.

On this occasion, the Government of Canada extends its sympathy to the Armenian people, and particularly to tens of thousands of our fellow Canadians of Armenian descent, and hopes that the conflict in Karabakh will be resolved in a peaceful, fair and equitable manner as soon as possible.

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Gaston Pélouin (Brome—Missisquoi): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is concerned about the way trade relations between Canada and the United States are developing, in particular with regard to Canadian exports of durum wheat and barley.

The Bloc Québécois condemns the intimidation tactics used by the U.S. government to end this dispute and asks the Canadian government to remain firm with its trading partner.

Thousands of Canadian and Quebec producers expect their government to defend their interests with authority, and the Bloc Québécois will support the federal government's representations as long as it stands up to the unacceptable pressure exerted by the U.S. and does not let itself be led into bargaining at the expense of other agricultural sectors such as dairy products and poultry.

[English]

SAINT-MAURICE CONSTITUENCY

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East): Mr. Speaker, Canadian taxpayers were angered to awake this morning to find a story in the Montreal *Gazette* outlining the federal government's intentions to invest \$4.8 million of their hard-earned dollars on a theme park in the Prime Minister's home town.

This project, which I suggest they call Jean's World, calls into question the new politics that were promised in the Liberal red book by continuing the tradition of rewarding the Prime Minister's home ridings with useless patronage projects.

I remind the members opposite of how loudly they bleated when Brian Mulroney built the patronage prison in Baie ComEAU. In comparison, the reaction from the members opposite regarding the Prime Minister's patronage park is the silence of the lambs.

* * *

DES AWARENESS WEEK

Mrs. Marlene Cowling (Dauphin—Swan River): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to remind the House that April 17 to 23, 1994 is Action Canada's DES Awareness Week. DES stands for diethylstilbestrol.

Between 1941 and 1971 approximately 200,000 to 400,000 pregnant Canadian women were prescribed the synthetic hormone to prevent miscarriage. As a result these mothers and their sons and daughters are at risk of health problems related to DES exposure.

DES Action Canada is a national non-profit consumer health organization that has worked since 1982 to alert Canadians of the potential dangers of DES. Most of the attention to date has focused on DES mothers who are at an increased risk of breast cancer and on daughters who may suffer from infertility or even cancer.

This year DES Action Canada will try to alert as many DES exposed women as possible.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Lachine—Lac-Saint-Louis): Mr. Speaker, our First Nations describe the earth as our mother and treat it with the deepest respect and affection. They say that the forest and its wildlife are adornments that make the mother more beautiful. The more beautiful they are, the better the mother feels.

*S. O. 31**[English]*

They say that rivers, streams and lakes are like the arteries and the veins in the body of the mother. The cleaner they are, the healthier they are, the healthier the mother is.

Their respect and love for mother earth is profound. Today is Earth Day. I suggest we pledge ourselves to learn from the example and show all the love and respect to mother earth that they do.

* * *

(1110)

*[Translation]***JOB CREATION**

Mr. Patrick Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine): Mr. Speaker, these past few days, I have had the pleasure of taking part in the announcement of the first phase of a \$4.5 million infrastructure project in the Kamouraska—Saint-Jean-Port—Joli area. Sixty direct jobs will be created and, better yet, according to the mayor of Saint-Jean-Port—Joli, the program will ensure the survival of a construction company located in his community.

This confirms that our government lives up to its commitment to economic recovery and job creation. With this infrastructure program, we are finally giving Canadians hope in a lasting recovery, instead of fostering political and economic uncertainty across the country, as the members opposite do so well. Canadians want jobs, and we are delivering.

* * *

QUEBEC'S RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the leader of the Reform Party, while visiting Quebec, stated that Canada would accept Quebecers' decision to become sovereign. By recognizing Quebec's right to self-determination, he has come to the obvious conclusion that Quebecers constitute a distinct society.

The recognition of Quebec's right to self-determination is part of a continuum. After the Conservative Party of Canada, the Liberal Party of Canada, and the New Democratic Party of Canada, the Reform Party confirms that it too would respect the democratic choice of Quebecers, a choice they will be called upon to make in the very near future. I am fully confident that they will move forward towards their historic goal, that is to be masters of their own destiny.

*[English]***CITIZENSHIP WEEK**

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley): Mr. Speaker, it is of great importance to me as a Reformer and a proud Canadian that as we celebrate Citizenship Week we begin the process of elevating the concept and value of citizenship within our country.

As Canadians we need to restore the value and pride that our citizenship deserves. As legislators we need to question policies that stand in the way of that restoration.

Do present policies of bilingualism and multiculturalism build bridges or walls to our diversities? Do record immigration levels added to our crippled economy and stressed social structures promote tolerance or misunderstanding in our land? Do government policies that weaken families and negate justice bring hope or despair to our people?

Whether we are Canadians by birth or by choice our citizenship must be elevated by the decisions to be made in this House as a privileged opportunity to proudly participate together in the making of a great future of a great country.

* * *

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk): Mr. Speaker, the United States will notify the GATT this afternoon that it intends to launch action against Canadian wheat and barley under article XXVIII.

I want to congratulate our minister of agriculture and our Minister for International Trade for not caving in to the Americans on this issue. The American argument is weak as increased sales into their market are a direct result of their own use of the export enhancement program. Fair and open trade cannot continue with these unjust actions.

Canada has a willingness to negotiate but there must be flexibility on both sides. This only goes to help lawyers and bureaucrats on both sides of the border. It does nothing to help farmers.

I call on our government to stay strong on this action and to tell the Americans that we are not prepared to cave in.

* * *

*[Translation]***PURCHASE OF FLU VACCINE**

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to congratulate the members of the joint federal-provincial-territorial committee in charge of purchasing flu vaccine for 1994-95.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

In keeping with a truly Canadian tradition, the committee split the contract equally between two companies, BioVac, in Quebec, and Connaught, in Ontario. This decision saves jobs and protects the interests of all parties concerned, including both companies, the federal government and the provinces.

The average price arrived at under the memorandum of agreement is \$1.77 per dosage unit, with Connaught getting \$1.69 and BioVac \$1.85. By awarding this contract to the Quebec company BioVac, the government is saving the jobs of ten workers in Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, in Ontario, who would have lost them had it been awarded entirely to Connaught.

As the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, I thank the minister for listening to my grievances and those of my constituents, allowing them to keep their jobs.

* * *

(1115)

[*English*]

JUSTICE

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Mr. Speaker, I raise today the issue of Patrick Kelly who is serving a sentence for first degree murder for which he has always professed his innocence.

In recent months, in fact in December, the main witness, Dawn Taber, withdrew her testimony indicating that she had not told the truth about events surrounding the case. In fact the whole case against Patrick Kelly was based on this one eye witness testimony.

In view of the retraction of that testimony, in view of the minister's power under section 690 of the Criminal Code, and in view of the fact that the minister already has the documentation in front of him and has said that this matter will be dealt with in the fullness of time, I urge the minister to act quickly on this matter. It has been in his hands for about four or five months now.

Not only is Patrick Kelly languishing in jail for a crime he did not commit but this also raises serious questions about the efficacy of the Canadian justice system.

I urge the minister to act with haste to resolve this matter.

The Speaker: Before we proceed to question period I would like once again to thank all of you who have sent your statements to the interpreters. I thank you also for, if I might call it this, the cadence of the statements you are making. Usually when they are a little slower we get a chance to get better, if that is possible, interpretation.

[*Translation*]

SOCIAL PROGRAM REFORM

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

Just two weeks from the date initially scheduled by the Minister of Human Resources Development to table his action plan concerning social program reform, the minister says that he "is not ready".

Also, yesterday a newspaper quoted the Minister of Finance who said: "Federal ministers, as well as Quebec's Minister of Finance, have agreed on a moratorium regarding social security reform".

Will the Deputy Prime Minister confirm that the Minister of Human Resources Development is improvising his reform and that, at the Minister of Finance's request, the government has decided to impose a moratorium?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, what we said and what we discussed last January with the finance ministers, is that there will be no cuts, there will be no freeze in transfers to provinces for a period of two years, precisely to give the Minister of Human Resources Development time to discuss and negotiate the necessary reforms with his counterparts.

The situation is very clear: We have decided on a moratorium to have a period of discussion and negotiation. In fact, this exercise has already been launched by the Minister of Human Resources Development.

[*English*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

I would like to know if she agrees with her colleague, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, who said earlier this week that the duplications in the main power sector are costing \$300 million to the Quebec taxpayers.

I would like to know if she maintains the assertion made by her colleague.

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is concerned with duplication at every level.

As a matter of fact we are working very hard with the province of Quebec and other provinces on harmonization of environmental laws. We are working very hard on harmonization of laws relating to trade. We are working very hard at breaking down the barriers between provinces.

Oral Questions

We see this as an important pillar in building the Canadian economy. Anything we can do to cut down expenses to the taxpayers we will support.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister has not really answered the question. Will she confirm whether or not the figure of some \$300 million quoted by the Quebec government is true, especially considering that the strategy regarding the youth program will create more duplication and overlap?

Will the Deputy Prime Minister and her government pledge to release the studies to which the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs referred, precisely to downplay duplication and overlap between Ottawa and the provinces, so that all members of this House are able to put a figure on the cost of Canadian federalism, and so that, as the Liberals promised in their red book, the whole negotiating process involving the provinces and the federal government can be more transparent?

(1120)

Is the Deputy Prime Minister prepared to release those studies, as did the Quebec government in the case of the Bélanger-Campeau commission, as did the Liberal Party of Quebec, which is of course pro-federalist, and as did the Parti Québécois in that province? Will you release these studies?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the federal government works very hard with all the provinces to reduce overlap in every sector, including human resources and the environment.

I also said that the work done by my colleague, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, aims precisely at determining costs and reducing those costs for all taxpayers.

The hon. member asked about the cost of federalism. I think that, instead of complaining like he does about every initiative taken by the government, he should tell Quebecers about the cost of separation.

The Speaker: Maybe the expressions used were inappropriate. We may want to refrain from making such loaded statements.

* * *

HIBERNIA PROJECT

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies): Yesterday, we learned that the Hibernia megaproject was swallowing up even more money.

The developers are now projecting cost overruns of almost \$1 billion on top of the original \$5.2 billion price tag. This represents an increase in costs of close to 20 per cent. An additional \$85 million in federal input and \$175 millions more in loans may be required. A lot of pressure is being put on the government to pump more money into this white elephant of the nineties.

Given the sad state of our public finances, is the Deputy Prime Minister prepared to make a commitment that the government will not invest a penny more in Hibernia and that this massive drain on public funds will stop, since the potential profitability of this megaproject, which the *Globe and Mail* has called a real tragedy, is being challenged?

[English]

Mr. George S. Rideout (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Speaker, first of all we should realize that these are preliminary numbers and preliminary estimates and that more detailed work is being done.

We have representatives on the board who are working to monitor the situation. We have contractual obligations as well that were entered into two years ago and we will have to honour those commitments. More money will be flowing to this project if it has an overrun.

[Translation]

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. In that case, will the Deputy Prime Minister undertake to ensure that Parliament will conduct a detailed analysis of the financing, profitability and industrial benefits of Hibernia before extending any more financial assistance?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, what is unfortunate in this situation is that the Bloc members, ever since the beginning of this new session, have been demanding job creation programs, and that is what we are trying to do.

Before asking us to axe Hibernia, I think the hon. member should take a look at who stands to benefit from these contracts? Does he realize that 34 Quebec companies are involved in the project? SNC Lavallin, MIL Davie, Monenco, Janin Construction, and Atlas Construction have all obtained contracts, following the commitment on the part of the federal government to ensure that the project is 65 per cent Canadian?

Does the hon. member want the federal government to break its commitment to SNC Lavallin, Monenco, Atlas and other private companies that need contracts from all over Canada?

Oral Questions

[English]

HIBERNIA

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster): Mr. Speaker, my question is also regarding white elephants which do nothing in comparison to live elephants that are able to walk.

The Hibernia project is at least a year behind schedule and at least \$1 billion over budget. Canadian taxpayers are directly at risk both through government commitments and through Petro-Canada. The Minister of Natural Resources has already said that Canadians are on the hook for another \$85 million.

(1125)

In light of the fact that government has been able to back out of the Pearson airport deal and from the EH-101 contract, can the Deputy Prime Minister guarantee that the federal government will not spend another cent of taxpayer money on this boondoggle?

Mr. George S. Rideout (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Speaker, it is passing strange that the member would raise this particular matter when we know full well that his leader has indicated this project is too far along to back out.

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Reform Party said the problem is that governments keep getting themselves in deeper and deeper and the sooner we extricate ourselves from these types of mismanaged projects the better.

When is the government going to learn? Hibernia is joining the Bricklin auto plant, the Mirabel airport, and now the Lloydminster upgrader has run out of operating funds. These are all entering the white elephant hall of fame.

What would have been the benefit to Canada's unemployed if the money spent on so-called megaprojects had been directed to deficit reduction, leading to lower taxes and thereby creating real jobs?

When will the government come to its senses and rescue taxpayers from the Hibernia project before it sinks?

Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, the member makes the comparison with Pearson airport and other projects. These are projects that had not begun, where hundreds of millions, or billions of dollars had not yet been spent, and where 5,300 Canadians are currently employed.

The policy of the Reform Party is, notwithstanding expenditures of billions already under way, to shut down a project and to throw away those billions, to throw away the lives of 5,300 Canadians who are currently employed and to bankrupt hundreds of secondary supply companies currently involved in this project.

Let me complete my answer by quoting Wood Gundy which has done an independent assessment of this project: "We believe that the upside potential from developing Hibernia and the returns that should be generated from the project offset the levels of risk that currently exist".

The assessment went on to compare this project with the Syncrude project of western Canada which now profitably produces approximately 12 per cent of the total Canadian production.

We believe in the west, we believe in the east, we believe in people. We do not abandon Canadians or projects halfway completed in the heartless fashion as proposed by this so-called Reform Party.

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster): Mr. Speaker, I get really concerned when I hear the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans answering a question on megaprojects.

I am trying to bring to the attention of the government the boondoggles it is involved in. I wonder why the Prime Minister is preparing to waste \$4.8 million tax dollars on a patronage park in his home riding. It is my understanding that perhaps the feature attraction will be a fantasyland ride called debt mountain.

Why is the Deputy Prime Minister ignoring a federal study which says that just like the failed humour museum in Montreal, the patronage park is also a bad joke?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I get concerned when I hear the leader of the Reform Party claiming to speak on behalf of Quebecers.

From the point of view of the government we are very happy that the minister who is the spokesperson for this project happens to be a minister who is from Newfoundland and who understands how beneficial the Hibernia project can be for not only Newfoundlanders but for those 34 Quebec companies that are receiving \$800 million in contracts, those literally millions of other dollars in contracts that are going out across the country.

Frankly, we on this side of the House are not going to apologize for creating jobs for Canadians.

Yesterday for the first time in the House the Reform Party started asking questions about the real issue that touches Canadians, and that is jobs. When the government through the minister responsible for FORD-Q or through the ministers responsible for energy or through the ministers responsible for industry and environment are out there creating jobs we do not expect to take flack from the Reform Party.

The Speaker: The only thing the Speaker really gets concerned about is the length of the questions and the length of the

Oral Questions

answers. I would ask hon. members to please be as concise as they can.

* * *

(1130)

[Translation]

SITUATION IN BOSNIA

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence. Yesterday, during the special debate on the situation in Bosnia, the Minister of Foreign Affairs announced that the government was supporting the United Nations' proposal for air strikes in order to protect the six safe areas designated by the UN in Bosnia following repeated violations of the various ceasefires by Bosnian Serb forces.

Can the Minister of Defence tell us exactly where things stand at this point in Gorazde and indicate if Russia approves of the UN Secretary-General's proposal for air strikes in Bosnia?

[English]

Hon. David Michael Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, as you know the North Atlantic Council has been meeting since nine o'clock Ottawa time. We do not have any results of the discussions. Should I have them before the end of question period, I will perhaps rise at twelve o'clock and make a statement if the House is willing.

With respect to the position of the Russian government, as you know, Mr. Speaker, it has had some reservations on the whole question of broadening air strikes in the former Yugoslav republic of Bosnia. We have no information as of this moment as to whether or not it has changed its position, but it is certainly something that has to be taken into consideration by the council at its meeting this morning.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères): Mr. Speaker, could the minister tell us what positions Canada took at the NATO summit in Brussels, particularly on the safety of Canadian peacekeepers in Bosnia and could he tell us also what decisions were made at that summit meeting?

[English]

Hon. David Michael Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, we did cover this last night in the debate. The instructions that we gave immediately following the cabinet meeting last night were to endorse the Secretary General's proposal for the Sarajevo type air strikes being widened to include the five safe havens under certain communications and control procedures of the United Nations and with NATO.

Our military people in Brussels will be consulted as to the exact methodology in terms of control to make sure that our objectives have been met.

With respect to the question of the safety of our troops, we did acknowledge yesterday that we have taken some precautions in and around our base in Visoko so that we do not unnecessarily expose our troops to the Bosnian Serb lines. However I should say that this does not mean, contrary to some media reports, that our troops are hunkered down in the base in Visoko. They are performing the humanitarian aid which has resumed into Sarajevo in the last day or so and they are carrying on their work.

Certainly any question of the safety of our troops will be taken in concert with all the members of the United Nations protective force in Bosnia.

* * *

TRADE

Mr. Jake E. Hooppner (Lisgar—Marquette): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

According to the American trade negotiator, Mickey Kantor, today marks the beginning of a trade war between Canada and the United States. It is obvious that Mr. Kantor has a chip on his shoulder and will not bring an open mind to the negotiating table. In fact Mr. Kantor says he expects a bit of a dust-up.

Mr. Kantor's attitude and comments are clearly unacceptable. One would hope the Prime Minister has already called the American president and demanded him to rein in his loose-lipped negotiator. Can the Deputy Prime Minister tell this House if the Prime Minister has made such a call and if so, what the president's response was?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has said that he intends to raise the matter specifically with the president. We expect if that has not already been done, it will be done before the weekend.

Mr. Jake E. Hooppner (Lisgar—Marquette): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Deputy Prime Minister for that answer.

I would suggest that this durum wheat issue goes beyond North America. While the Americans complain about Canadian durum they subsidize their own durum by \$35 to \$52 per tonne for export to world markets. Meanwhile the Europeans have their own durum shortage and have put a \$52 per tonne export tax on it to keep theirs at home.

I would suggest and I would urge the Deputy Prime Minister to insist that the Prime Minister call the President of the United States and be prepared to demand that the American export subsidies—

The Speaker: Order, please. I would request of my colleagues that the questions be just a little bit shorter. There was a question in there, if the Minister for International Trade would care to answer.

Oral Questions

(1135)

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I had a little difficulty hearing the end of the question, therefore I am not sure what the question is. I can simply say that in the case of durum wheat, we certainly had the considerations he raised in mind during our negotiations with the United States and they will be very much in our mind in any further discussions.

* * *

*[Translation]***PURCHASE OF PROPERTIES IN OKA**

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. Yesterday, those we now call the forsaken of Oka participated in a calm and peaceful demonstration to show how desperate and impatient they have become because of the federal government's failure to meet its commitment. These people own homes on highway 344, south of the Kanesatake territory; they have been waiting for an answer for nearly four years now.

Will the government now commit itself to settling that issue before the end of the present session in June by buying the properties of these forsaken residents of Oka, as it promised to do and as it has done for all those living north of highway 344?

[English]

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, no decision has been made with regard to the property south of highway 344, but the minister is willing to meet with these people and I am sure that will be forthcoming.

[Translation]

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, how can we explain the slowness with which the government is dealing with the Oka situation, knowing how fast the federal government proceeded to buy the property of Mr. Bernard Roy, former Chief of Staff to Prime Minister Mulroney, located in the same area, south of highway 344, for \$500,000. Do we have two kinds of justice in this country?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I believe it would be more useful if this question were directed to Brian Mulroney, the former friend of the Leader of the Official Opposition.

*[English]***TRADE**

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

Canadian apple growers are looking to this government for action to protect them from wholesale dumping by the Americans, a blatant violation of the Canada-U.S. free trade agreement, of NAFTA and of GATT. The government asked for proof and the growers provided that proof. Truly time is of the essence in this matter. It has to be dealt with quickly.

Will the minister assure Canadian apple growers that this government will immediately initiate action to stop this dumping?

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite will be aware of the fact that the Canadian International Trade Tribunal has already inquired into the question raised by the hon. member. It is indeed open to the Canadian apple growers to petition foreign anti-dumping investigation if that is their wish.

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

Will the Deputy Prime Minister explain why this government is so ineffective when it comes to protecting Canadian farmers against dumping by the Americans?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I would argue the absolute contrary. In fact, this government has stood very fast in the face of rather ridiculous comments by people like Mickey Kantor and the senator from the United States who has the nerve to suggest he would turn cruise missiles on us, the very cruise missiles we were testing for them for a number of years.

We are very unhappy. We do not intend to cave in. We have not agreed to the American negotiations. The Prime Minister is going to be discussing it with the president and we intend to take future action.

* * *

(1140)

*[Translation]***2002 OLYMPIC GAMES**

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

We know that Corporation Québec 2002 needs help from the federal government to complete its presentation to the International Olympic Committee in order to be a candidate for hosting the Games. The corporation has been asking for a long time that a representative of the government be appointed in order to initiate trilateral negotiations on the \$240 million financing guarantees that are required, and were given to Calgary in the past.

Oral Questions

The deadlines have been moved forward by the IOC, and rather than urging organizers of Québec 2002 to be patient, like the Minister of Canadian Heritage is doing, could the Deputy Prime Minister tell us whether the government intends to give a speedy answer to Québec 2002?

[English]

Ms. Albina Guarnieri (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Canadian Heritage): Mr. Speaker, we are naturally enthusiastic about a united Canada hosting the Olympics in Quebec in the year 2002.

We have already committed \$2.8 million to the bid and are currently exploring funding possibilities in conjunction with the organizers.

[Translation]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Deputy Prime Minister or the parliamentary secretary. The deadline for the bid is getting very close. Québec 2002 must have an answer from the federal government in the next few weeks, because the deadline is August 18.

Could she tell us whether an answer will be given and a negotiator appointed? Will the negotiations be modelled on what was done for Calgary?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary has already indicated the willingness of the federal government to help Québec 2002. Clearly the Quebec site is fantastic. I have personally visited the proposed site. Everybody is waiting to find out whether Canada will be selected as host for the 2002 Olympic Games. Negotiations are going on and you will get an answer shortly.

* * *

[English]

SNOW CRAB FISHERY

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

While his announcement earlier this week has brought welcomed relief and hope to many fishing communities in Atlantic Canada, the minister will know that a potentially explosive situation is brewing in the snow crab fishery in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

With the groundfishery there all but decimated, gulf fishermen without snow crab licences have watched with growing envy and frustration as a small group of snow crab fishermen do extremely well from their access to this now valuable and plentiful resource.

How is the fisheries minister proposing to address this glaring inequity and avert a crisis in the snow crab fishery in the Gulf of St. Lawrence?

Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his question. Indeed, he has brought to the attention of the House one of the more difficult situations in Atlantic Canada. That is the incredible irony in the comparison between those who have plenty and those who have very little or nothing. It is causing great tensions in our communities. Frankly, in some communities in the province of Quebec in the last week fishermen are in conflict with each other. None of us want to see that in Atlantic Canada.

I have spoken to representatives of both the crab fleet and representatives of groundfishermen in the last 24 hours from Quebec, New Brunswick and elsewhere in the region. The fishermen have begun a dialogue across the gear sectors. The fishermen are suggesting they will attempt to reach a means of seeing a better sharing of the wealth of the resource in question.

I want to give them that chance to work among themselves and to hear what they recommend, I hope during this weekend, so that we can have a working solution in time for the beginning of the crab season next week.

* * *

ENVIRONMENTAL SECRETARIAT

Mr. Bill Gilmour (Comox—Alberni): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment. The choice of Montreal for the environmental secretariat was supposedly based on the following criteria: transportation accessibility, support services, diplomatic services, cost of living, and environmental record.

An analysis of the consultant's report shows that Toronto has more flights to all three capitals than Montreal. Ottawa offers more diplomatic and government services. Montreal's cost of living is 10th on the list of 25 contenders and Montreal's environmental record is 20th on the list, a terrible record. Clearly—

(1145)

The Speaker: Order. I invite the hon. member to put his question, please.

Mr. Gilmour: How can the minister justify the selection of Montreal for the environmental secretariat?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, today is Earth Day. Today is the day when every Canadian should be thinking about how we can improve our earth.

Instead, what I hear from members of the Reform Party is constant carping, criticism and carving up of the country. Its leader went to Montreal yesterday and I think he got a very strong message. If the leader of the Reform Party wants to begin

to understand what the country is all about, he had better not start thinking in small pieces; he had better start thinking big.

One of the things we did in making our decision about the centre was that we looked at all applicants. We looked at the criteria that we established and we made a decision based on our best political and environmental advice.

The reality is that any decision made by a government is a decision that involves politics. The difference between this party and that one is that we actually understand all parts of the country. In the case of the Reform Party, it is obvious that its understanding is very limited.

Mr. Bill Gilmour (Comox—Alberni): Mr. Speaker, the minister is sending mixed signals. One day she is saying that it is a political decision; the next, she is saying that it is based on this consultant's report.

Will the minister tell us what she means by a political decision?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the budget for the suits of the leader of the Reform Party is also political.

The reality is that if one follows the criteria of the member and suggests that the centre should have gone to Toronto because it has the most number of flights, every single thing done by every ministry in the government should go to Toronto. Toronto has more direct flights to all parts of the United States and Mexico.

The reality is that sometimes we have to make tough decisions. I said that it was a difficult decision. I said that we tried to consider all the factors. My own community was bitter. Do members think it was easy for me to say no to the people of Hamilton?

The reality is that politics is about making difficult decisions and making them in the best interest of the country. That is what we have tried to do.

* * *

[Translation]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. A month ago, an adjudicator at the labour court in the Vancouver area handed down a ruling ordering Canada Post Corporation to guarantee the social benefits of the same-sex spouse of one of its employees. We heard that the Minister of Justice did not intend to appeal this ruling, which caused considerable consternation in the gay community and among all those with a concern for human rights.

Oral Questions

I want to ask the Deputy Prime Minister what her government's plans are with respect to extending guarantees and recognition of the rights of same-sex spouses?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I believe the Minister of Justice said he was not prepared to proceed with an appeal in each case. In fact, he gave instructions that in some cases where an appeal had been made, the appeals should not be pursued.

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect for the Deputy Prime Minister, if this had been a question on an examination, she would have failed her exam.

May I remind the Deputy Prime Minister that the Minister of Justice promised to proceed with a thorough review of the Canadian Human Rights Act and that on several occasions during the election campaign, her government repeatedly made a commitment to recognize sexual orientation as grounds for discrimination. When will this government stop its double talk and ask the Minister of Justice to go ahead and introduce legislation that will guarantee an end to discrimination and recognize the rights of same-sex spouses?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, first of all, the hon. member asked me some questions about a court ruling, and I made it clear that the Minister of Justice had already given instructions not to pursue these appeals. I think the message is pretty clear.

(1150)

Moreover, the Minister of Justice has stated that the government is working on meeting its commitment in the red book to prohibit discrimination because of sexual orientation, whatever it may be. The government promised in the red book that it would proceed with a review of our human rights legislation. The government is working on this, and there will be a policy very shortly as far as the Justice Department is concerned.

* * *

[English]

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Solicitor General.

A short while ago Correctional Service Canada announced the appointment of a kikawinaw or a matron for the healing lodge on the Nekaneet band reserve in my riding. This is a very expensive senior position but that institution will not be operational for at least another year.

Does the minister approve of this sort of management within his department?

Oral Questions

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, the staff in my view has to be hired and ready to work with local and native groups.

There is no way in my view the institution could operate efficiently if the people who are going to be the staff come there after the doors are open. It is just common sense.

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I wish the hon. minister had been my employer when I was in the working world.

This is going to be a relatively open institution but, as I understand, it will house serious offenders now incarcerated in other institutions.

What reassurances could the Solicitor General offer for the security of farmers and ranchers who are understandably concerned about the matter and who will be living next door to the place?

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, the point the hon. member has raised is being taken into account in the planning of the institution.

There will be the proper facilities and staff to deal with the fact that some people in it will be of maximum security nature. Certainly the approach we are taking makes more sense than that of the hon. member who would have the prisoners go into the institution before the staff is even hired.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM

Ms. Shaughnessy Cohen (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board.

The government is working hard to create thousands of jobs throughout the country. The crown jewel of those initiatives is the Canada infrastructure program.

Could the minister tell the House the status of the many infrastructure project applications that have been received?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for giving me the opportunity to bring some good news to members of the House.

The program is up and operating in record breaking time. It is now at a point where we have approved 200 projects worth \$300 million. To date 5,000 jobs are to be created by those projects, which puts us well on the path toward the 90,000 jobs we have projected will be created by the program.

There are people now being employed in engineering and design work. There are tenders being called. There are construction workers who will soon be getting out and getting shovels into the ground so we can get Canadians back to work.

* * *

[Translation]

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Maurice Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead): Mr. Speaker, now that government advertising is over, we will go back to regular programming.

According to a federal study, Ottawa is about to spend \$4.8 million on an industry interpretation centre project in Shawinigan. The study in question, which was commissioned by the Federal Office of Regional Development in Trois-Rivières, concludes that it is a mistake and a bad joke.

(1155)

My question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. Does she admit that this project cannot be self-financing and that her government is about to repeat the same mistake it made with the Humour Museum in Montreal, which closed its doors less than 12 months after opening?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about a project that was supported not only by the long-standing local authorities and the former government but also by the Bloc member for Trois-Rivières, Mr. Yves Rocheleau.

It must be said that, although there is some dissension within the Bloc Québécois, the project is supported by all the local authorities. There is also a study which raised some very valid questions, and the government intends to answer these questions. This study is only one of many. It must be said that when local communities have the desire and the capacity to support a project, I think it is worthwhile for both the Canadian and the Quebec governments to follow suit.

Mr. Maurice Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance is a serious man; now, the study we are talking about, which was commissioned by his office, his officials, concludes that this project has no chance of being viable and that the figures submitted are inflated in several respects.

Instead of wasting \$4.8 million in public funds to honour an election promise made by the Prime Minister, does the Minister of Finance admit that what the people of Shawinigan and the St. Maurice region need is industrial projects that create real jobs instead of a white elephant without any kind of guarantee it will be self-supporting?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, the Legault, Grysole and

Oral Questions

Associates study undoubtedly concluded that the project needed certain changes. That is the purpose of the study and we intend to make these changes.

If you want to talk about jobs, I would ask you to listen to the President of the Treasury Board, who just told us that we invested \$300 million in a project that will create 90,000 jobs in Canada.

* * *

[English]

DAY CARE

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development or for whomever the government chooses to answer.

The red ink book advocates an extensive increase in the number of child care spaces available. The government funding for this service will be paid by individual taxpayers whether or not they use it. Government funded day care increases the tax burden on Canadians and will further discriminate against families who choose to be single income households.

Does the government recognize that such a proposal will force more parents to send their children to day care even if they would prefer to stay home with them?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the member's colleague was asking the government what we could do to get people working.

Obviously one of the things we could do to get people working is to ensure that they have proper support for their children when in fact they are out in the paid workforce. I happen to believe that women who work at home are working every bit as hard so I specify the paid workforce.

However, for the member to suggest the government pull out of child care funding, it would take the case of the Canadian economy back decades. At the moment child care spaces across the country are set up by provincial governments with the financial assistance of the federal government directly to those families, primarily single income mother led families who without the assistance would not be able to go out into the paid labour force.

The member suggests that for some people it is not necessary. The same thing holds true for health care. Would he like to abolish national health care or education?

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin): Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister misses the point. I do not advocate withdrawing funds or inhibiting people from going to work.

A voucher system would allow parents to stay home with their children or to send them to the most suitable day care. It would also direct public assistance to those who really need it.

(1200)

Will the Deputy Prime Minister and the government consider the introduction of a child care voucher system rather than universal day care?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I am a parent and there is no government that tells me where I have to send my child for child care. We do live in a free country.

At the moment what this government has said is that when it comes to employment outside the home obviously child care is an important component of any initiative to help people get out to work. Our government intends to meet its commitments in the red book.

I only wish that the member had a better understanding of how hard it is for those women trying to juggle work outside the home and work at home. I only wish that he and his party would give them more support.

* * *

TRADE

Mr. John Solomon (Regina—Lumsden): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister for International Trade.

Yesterday I met with a number of U.S. congressmen to discuss U.S.—Canada trade issues, including the durum wheat question. My conclusion is that this being an election year in the United States with many U.S. legislators up for re-election, they have become strong protectionists to the point of ignoring certain trade agreements like NAFTA and GATT.

Can we have his government's assurance that it is going to protect Canadian farmers' interests and not cave in to these American protectionists' posturing at this point?

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the member can certainly have that assurance. I believe it is reflected in the stance we have taken in the negotiations, in the discussions during the past months. We will continue to protect in every respect the interests of Canadian grain farmers. We have done so in the past and we will continue to do so in any future discussions.

The Speaker: I am sure all members heard the cannon. There is a point of order from the minister of fisheries.

*Routine Proceedings***POINTS OF ORDER**

COMMENTS DURING QUESTION PERIOD

Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, during question period I referred to Hibernia's having created 5,300 direct jobs. That information was wrong and I want to stand to correct the record. The number is actually 6,282.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Hon. Fernand Robichaud (Secretary of State (Parliamentary Affairs)): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table in both official languages, the government's response to four petitions.

* * *

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, today is Earth Day in Canada, a day that we have set aside to join with people around the world in making our own personal contribution to the well-being of our environment.

Since Earth Day was first celebrated in Canada on April 22 four years ago, the grassroots support for this event has grown so rapidly it now involves nearly one in three Canadians in some form of environmental activity. There is much energy, enthusiasm and support for greening our way of life.

More than ever before Canadians are aware of our natural environment and we are doing something to make sure that what we now enjoy can be passed on to our children and to their children. By planting a tree, composting kitchen waste, reusing shopping bags, recycling cans, returning bottles and demanding less packaging from producers, Canadians are showing that we want governments to sit up and take notice.

In fact, recent surveys have shown that 60 per cent of Canadians support more spending for environmental protection. Industry too is quickly coming to realize that green planning and green operations mean green savings and green bucks.

Almost every sector of our economy now realizes that consumer demand means that by producing a product in an environmentally friendly manner you can have the critical competitive edge.

[*Translation*]

Business and industry, for their part, are asking the government to put its house in order. They need our co-operation as well as clear, specific directions to achieve our environmental objectives.

(1205)

I am proud to announce to this House and to all Canadians that our government is answering the call. Canadians can stand up and say that their federal government is the first green government in our country.

Three former federal environment ministers currently sit in this House, along with a former provincial environment minister. Two of these people are leaders of their respective parties.

We are also fortunate to have the highly qualified Chairman of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development and finally, my parliamentary secretary who is absolutely indispensable to me.

[*English*]

Canadians can also feel secure that there is environmental leadership within their government. We are proud to have a Prime Minister who understands that environment is an integral part of job creation and growth and who made sustainable development an underlying theme of our red book.

Our Prime Minister appointed our former Speaker, the one who initiated the greening of the Hill program, to be our ambassador for the environment to the world. We have a Prime Minister who created more national parks than any other minister in the history of Canada. We have a Prime Minister who announced clearly on his first international trip that Canada's water is not for sale.

Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs understands that we must work globally to attack environmental degradation and make sure that the global environment facility, the GEF, and the Montreal protocol receive Canada's fair contribution.

Our minister responsible for infrastructure made water and sewer upgrades, environmentally friendly projects, an important part of our national infrastructure program.

The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans moved quickly to fulfil promises made about Kemano and has also recognized that eco-tourism can play an important role in the revitalization of our economy.

The Minister of Human Resources Development and the secretary of state for youth have announced a plan to involve youth in environmental training programs to help us get environmental industries on the cutting edge of the world community.

My colleague, the Minister for Natural Resources, has been actively promoting sustainable development in her natural resource sector. She has also been working very hard on energy

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efficiencies, an integral component of any future use of energy when we realize that we are the most energy consuming country in the world. Her department's model forest program provides a model for sustainable forest management.

She has also recently tabled the first report to Parliament on the Energy Efficiency Act which outlines the environmental and economic benefits available to energy users to improve energy efficiency.

[*Translation*]

We have a Minister of Finance who acts in a progressive manner on environmental issues. Last February, he announced a major new initiative in support of sustainable development.

In the budget, it was announced that a task force involving government, industry and representatives of environmental groups would be established to identify barriers to sound environmental management.

This task force will also focus on a wide range of economic instruments which rely on market forces and demonstrate potential for rapid implementation either as an alternative to or to complement environmental regulations.

Speaking of this task force, I am delighted to announce today that following consultations with all interested parties, the Minister of Finance and I will be releasing shortly the names of the task force members and the nature of the task force's mandate.

[*English*]

I am very pleased on behalf of the Minister of Finance and myself to announce that we are moving ahead rapidly with our commitment to analyse how tax policy and how economic instruments can be used to help build a strong environmental record.

Very shortly we will be announcing the membership and the terms of reference of a committee. It will be examining the whole issue of not only economic instruments as they can help government policy but also a review of taxes and subsidies to make sure that they are environmentally friendly and do not work against a clean environment.

I could go on and mention the environmental contributions of every single member of this cabinet, for example the Minister for Industry and his secretary of state who are working very hard on environmental industries, but the point is clear. This government, this cabinet and this Prime Minister are committed to the environmentally sound management of our nation's business.

(1210)

[*Translation*]

As Minister of the Environment, I am proud of my department's achievements. In the six months since taking office, we have built strong foundations to meet our commitments. I said that we would pass legislation providing for a round table on the economy and the environment. This will give existence in law to a vital organization and also fulfil a commitment made in the red book.

The throne speech spoke of the government's intentions and I also announced that we would pass an environmental assessment act this spring, as was requested by the Leader of the Opposition. As promised in the red book, we will also strengthen regulations, thereby fulfilling a second commitment.

In co-operation with my colleague, the Minister of Industry, and his Secretary of State, we are in the process of developing a government strategy for environmental industries and we sponsored consultations earlier this winter, in order to generate the required public support. We are currently looking at the comments received and the strategy will be announced very soon. This is the third commitment fulfilled.

Last Monday, I had the pleasure and the honour of announcing phase II of the Great Lakes action plan, as well as the implementation of the plan for the St. Lawrence, Vision 2000. These two plans are major steps to clean up the largest freshwater expanse in the world.

These initiatives, combined with the statutory five-year review of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act which will soon be undertaken by the standing committee of the House, will enable us to fulfil another promise made in the red book regarding pollution prevention. We should soon get the answer of the parliamentary committee on our commitment regarding the Auditor General, and we also expect results very quickly. This is the fourth commitment fulfilled.

An oil tanker sank some time ago. We worked with the four provinces concerned, in co-operation with the Minister of Transport, and we found a solution which will soon be implemented. This is another commitment fulfilled.

Earlier this spring, I gave the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development the very important mandate of looking at the concept of an auditor general for the environment. The committee made its recommendations, thus allowing us to fulfil another commitment made in the red book.

[*English*]

Our government is keeping its promises and we hope with the help of the Parliament of Canada to continue to do so.

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On Earth Day I wish to give my friends and colleagues in this House and all Canadians my personal pledge that we want to work with the provinces, the municipalities, workers, environmental groups, businesses and, most important, we want to work with the children of Canada to ensure the protection and promotion of our natural environment.

As Minister of the Environment for Canada I am proud of what we have accomplished. I would be prouder still if I could stand today and tell this House that we have no need for Earth Day, that we do not need a special day to think about the environment because every day is Earth Day in Canada.

This House has heard many speeches from many eloquent individuals but I would like to leave members with the motto which I think should be the standard bearer for Earth Day, for this House, for our country and for the world. It is an ancient Haida saying which we all know and which we should take to heart: We do not inherit the land from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve): Mr. Speaker, now that the Minister of the Environment has praised the government's actions with respect to the environment, the Official Opposition would rather talk, on this Earth Day, about the real problems, that is problems in our ecosystem and challenges that must be met so that we can live in a sound environment.

The minister would rather dwell on her government's accomplishments since the election. So, allow me to put in perspective some of those accomplishments that must leave more than one Quebecer and Canadian totally confused.

(1215)

Regarding the legislation, the minister has made several statements in the House and in the media. However, we still have not had the pleasure of seeing one single bill come out of her department. The minister seems to misunderstand the legislative process leading to the meeting of an electoral commitment. It is not enough to announce that regulations relating to the Environmental Assessment Act will be produced and that a bill on the round table on the economy and the environment will be presented for people to consider that the Liberal Party has kept its promises. If the government thinks that its commitments have been met simply because they were announced, we may end up once again facing needless verbiage and pious hope.

After announcing with great pomp that there will be consultations on governmental strategy with environmental industries, it seems, as was the case in Montreal, according to some observers, that in fact these consultations were only an excuse for a social gathering of officials. It would appear that the environmental industry was not really associated with the process. Yet, the Official Opposition had given its support to this initiative,

hoping it would be an opportunity to promote research and development in environmental industries. So, there is still much to be done before the minister can proudly announce that her commitment has been met.

Mr. Speaker, I would be glad to have talks with the minister. I know she is in a good mood today and it is always with great pleasure that I have talks with her. So I will continue to do so.

As for the St. Lawrence Action Plan—

Mrs. Copps: But not always in good faith.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Order. I realize that, from time to time, there may be some friendly give and take between two members, but perhaps we could stick to the subject of this debate.

Mr. Ménard: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your vigilance.

As for the St. Lawrence action plan, now pompously called St. Lawrence Vision 2000, this government is merely continuing the Conservative Party's policies. I do not think we can see this as meeting a commitment made by the Liberal Party.

Unfortunately, the budget brought down by the Minister of Finance, to which the minister refers with such enthusiasm, contains no funding for dealing with harbour sediment contamination, although according to the minister, the infrastructure program would be able to provide the necessary funds. If that were the case, we would be delighted. However, according to *Le Soleil*, and the minister has probably read this, one of the department's officials expressed some serious doubts about that possibility.

Although there have been many important announcements, it is clear that implementation is lagging, while the public's very legitimate expectations are increasing. Consider the case of chlorinated organic compounds, which include most pesticides—whose presence in our Great Lakes are a threat to the health of the people living in these densely populated areas, as was pointed out in the latest report of the International Joint Commission.

Furthermore, as was pointed out by the chairman of the Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, the hon. member for Davenport, Canada has been postponing ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea for nine years now, a convention that, if implemented, would contribute very substantially towards protecting the oceans, improving the fisheries and reducing the risk of pollution. So far, 57 countries have signed the convention, but 60 signatures are required to ratify it. Now that, Mr. Speaker, would be good news. That is something tangible the very energetic Minister of the Environment could have done.

Quebecers and Canadians have no illusions about the triumphant announcements made today by the Minister of the Environment. I am surprised that I am the one in this House who will

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have to describe the serious problems facing Canadians, Quebecers and humanity.

Since the early 19th century, more than half of our tropical forests have disappeared. Only 40 per cent of the forests are still standing in Third World countries, and this dramatic situation has led to the extinction of 100 species daily. Desertification is a problem in more than 100 countries and it affects more than 800 million people.

One third of Asia's arable land is threatened by desertification, and 80 countries, with 40 per cent of the world's population, lack clean drinking water, and deteriorating water quality is a death sentence for millions of children. The global environmental situation has reached crisis proportions.

(1220)

Instead of dealing at length with the qualifications of her Cabinet colleagues and the Prime Minister, the Minister of the Environment should have taken advantage of Earth Day celebrated today to bring the discussion to a higher level and inform us of the direction her government will take regarding solutions that will have to be put forward by Canada and other countries if we want to live in a community where environment meets the demands of the population, in particular those of young people who will inherit the outcome of the decisions we are taking today.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you and I want to say to the minister that we wish to be part of any initiative that she will propose to this House, but until now, concrete measures have been delayed for a long time and we pray St. Basile that legislative action will be taken as soon as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I cannot help asking myself if the invitation of the minister is still on the table or on the ground, but anyway the issue is worth following.

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Gilmour (Comox—Alberni): Mr. Speaker, as Earth Day is a positive day, I will keep my comments in a positive vein.

Earth Day is a time for all of us to look inward and examine what many of us take for granted, the planet on which we live.

I am pleased to see that we are on a path through the forest that leads toward a sustainable future and that we are addressing, although sometimes quite slowly, ways to prevent pollution thus ensuring a healthy planet for our children and our grandchildren.

The Brundtland commission's definition of sustainability: "Leaving our planet to our children in the same or better condition than the one that we inherited" should be the goal of each and every one of us. In order to achieve this goal we need to get into the regular habit of doing more with less.

Although I agree with the minister that government should be involved, I feel that it is more up to each and every one of us personally, not someone else, to do what is right. Only when we take responsibility and learn to live our everyday lives by conserving resources will we have achieved this goal of sustainability.

As I said earlier, we are still on the path in the forest. Sustainability is still some distance away. Only when we live each and every day as Earth Day will we have achieved that long awaited goal.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I wonder if I could seek unanimous consent of the House to allow the member for Regina—Lumsden to say a few words on behalf of the New Democratic Party. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. John Solomon (Regina—Lumsden): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues in the House. It is my pleasure today to join with members of this House of Commons in celebrating Earth Day. First, I congratulate all those in Canada who are taking as a priority not only our country but our planet in terms of its environment.

I have met with many individuals and organizations in my constituency in the city of Regina who are taking an active role in their community to ensure that when they leave this earth as living persons, they leave it a better place in terms of environment and resources for their children.

I congratulate them on their efforts in terms of recycling programs and other approaches that they are taking, which I participate in as well. I recycle all of my glass, tins, plastics, newspapers, clothing and other things that I or my family consumes. I think it is important that all legislators consider following that example that, indeed, many of our children have set for us.

I agree with the government's priority of ensuring that we have an environmental plan in this country. I agree with its sentiment that we should leave this earth better than we found it because we are indeed caring for this earth on behalf of future generations. Nobody knows that more than parents who see their children growing through various stages of their lives and see some of the very difficult challenges that face our young people in today's economy and today's environment.

(1225)

I have a little bit of a difference of opinion from the government. The Liberals in opposition spoke very loud in terms of opposing the green plan that was put forward by the former Conservative government. The catch words here are: Actions speak louder than words. Their action in opposition was that they opposed the green plan. Their action is government is that they are implementing the Conservative green plan. To me that is a flip-flop.

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I do not believe the government is taking seriously its verbal commitments to ensuring we have a healthy and strong environment in this country. That is demonstrated very clearly by the fact that here we are into the end of April 1994, we have been sitting here for three months, and the government has yet to bring forward any major discussion opportunity in the House of Commons on our environment in Canada. There is no new green plan. It is implementing an old green plan that was not acceptable to the Liberals in opposition. Now they flip-flop in government and support the green plan. Actions speak louder than words.

The other action the government has undertaken is it appointed the NAFTA environment office to the city of Montreal which does not have an example of good environmental protection for its citizens. It has one of the worst records in Canada.

My sense is that actions speak louder than words. The Liberals are very, very wordy. They get up, talk and rant and rave about all sorts of wonderful things they are doing but they are not doing anything. Their actions prove the opposite.

On behalf of the New Democratic Party we will continue to ask the government to ensure that it does put the environment on the agenda and to ensure that Canada's environment is sustained for future generations.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 17th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of committees.

If the House gives its unanimous consent, I intend to move concurrence in the 17th report later this day.

* * *

CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-240, an act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and the Criminal Code.

She said: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act as well as the Criminal Code to provide for the detention of high risk violent offenders after the expiration of their sentences and to provide for the detention of sex offenders convicted of offences against children.

This bill will give the Correctional Service of Canada and the National Parole Board the power to refer the offender to the appropriate Attorney General for a dangerous offender hearing. Upon making a dangerous offender finding, a court could then make the following orders for the protection of society: First, custody for an indefinite period of time; second, custody for a definite period of time; and third, supervised release in the community for a period of 10 years.

The second aspect of this bill would eliminate the need to prove the serious harm criteria when dealing with high risk offenders who victimize children. The current requirement to prove serious harm is difficult in cases involving children as the actual harm to the child may not be evident for several years. A child's difficulty in clearly communicating the effect of a sexual crime makes serious harm very difficult to detect.

It is my pleasure to introduce this bill. I hope it is given great consideration as it is very important for the protection of society.

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

* * *

(1230)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 17th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented to the House earlier this day be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to.)

* * *

PETITIONS

NAVIGABLE WATERS

Mr. Dan McTeague (Ontario): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the honour to present a petition that has been signed by over 300 residents of Ontario riding and elsewhere concerning Frenchman's Bay.

The petitioners call on Parliament to urge the government to use its powers over navigation and shipping as outlined in section 92(10) of the Constitution Act and in the Federal Navigable Waters Protection Act to undertake dredging operations in Frenchman's Bay in order to correct the loss of draught both in the bay and in the channel entrance.

Due to a severe build-up of silt the draught in Frenchman's Bay has been dramatically reduced and now a serious threat is being posed to personal safety and to boats entering that channel.

Routine Proceedings

EL SALVADOR

Mr. Jack Frazer (Saanich—Gulf Islands): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, it is my duty and honour to rise in the House to present a petition duly certified by the clerk of petitions on behalf of constituents.

The petitioners humbly pray and call upon Parliament to urge our government to constitute the appropriate representations to the El Salvadoran government to comply with the peace accords and human rights standard before their April 24 run-off election and thereafter.

[Translation]

RETIRED PERSONS

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table a petition from the *Association québécoise des retraités*, Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup section, expressing to the House the association's dismay over the numerous attacks which the Liberal government has launched on the incomes of retired persons, in particular its proposal to reform old age pensions and to abolish the universal age tax credit. I believe that the views of the senior citizens in my riding must be taken into account and I therefore wish to table this petition.

[English]

KILLER CARDS

Ms. Shaughnessy Cohen (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour, pursuant to Standing Order 36, to present a petition requesting that the laws of Canada be amended to prohibit the importation, distribution, sale and manufacture of killer cards in law and to advise producers of killer cards that their product, if destined for Canada, will be seized and destroyed.

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk): Mr. Speaker, I rise under Standing Order 36 to put forward petitions concerning killer cards.

I thank the minister for bringing to the attention of the House that he plans to introduce legislation in this area.

The numbers of petitions from places throughout my riding give support to him in getting rid of these killer cards.

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition from my constituents in 100-Mile House, British Columbia.

(1235)

My constituents ask that Parliament not repeal or amend section 241 of the Criminal Code and uphold the Supreme Court of Canada decision of September 30, 1993 to disallow assisted suicide, euthanasia.

This petition is presented with my concurrence.

JUSTICE

Mr. Gordon Kirkby (Prince Albert—Churchill River): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, it is my duty and pleasure to present a petition on behalf of a number of constituents of Prince Albert—Churchill River calling for the repeal of section 745 of the Criminal Code.

The petitioners strongly oppose this clause which allows convicted murderers serving mandatory life sentences of 25 years without parole to apply for parole after 15 years.

I urge all members to consider these views expressed by the residents of La Ronge, Buffalo Narrows, Smeaton, Shellbrook, Waskesiu, Holbein and Southend in my riding in northern Saskatchewan.

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present a petition, along with my colleague from the opposite side of the House, to repeal section 745 of the Criminal Code.

This section is called faint hope. It allows a convicted murderer sentenced to life without parole for 25 years to apply for parole after 15 years.

I support this petition. I feel that when a judge and jury make the determination that somebody should not have access to parole for 25 years it should be respected, and I support this petition 100 per cent.

SERIAL KILLER BOARD GAMES

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, it is my duty to present on behalf of the constituents of Lambton—Middlesex and area a petition which has been duly certified by the clerk of petitions.

It urges the Government of Canada to ban the sale of the serial killer board games and serial killer cards in order to protect innocent children.

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by over 1,000 Canadians from several communities in a number of provinces.

The petitioners pray and call upon Parliament not to repeal or amend section 241 of the Criminal Code and to uphold the Supreme Court of Canada decision of September 30, 1993 to disallow assisted suicide and euthanasia.

I wish to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to indicate to you and to the House that I fully concur with the views expressed in this petition.

NATIONAL ENERGY BOARD

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, it is my duty to present a petition on behalf of the constituents of Lambton—Middlesex and area.

Private Members' Business

The petition has been duly certified by the clerk of petitions. It urges the government to amend the National Energy Board Act to provide authority to the National Energy Board toward intervenor funding in cost to land owners who intervene in proceedings before the board on issues of public interest and relevant to the construction and operation of pipelines.

* * *

[Translation]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Hon. Fernand Robichaud (Secretary of State (Parliamentary Affairs)): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Shall all questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): As agreed earlier today, the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

INCOME SECURITY

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider the advisability of ensuring that the reform of the tax system is harmonized and integrated with review and reform of the Canadian system of social security as a whole with a view to most efficiently realizing the fundamental objective of income security for all Canadians.

He said: Mr. Speaker, my motion is seconded by the member for Regina—Lumsden.

(1240)

It calls on the House to agree that the government should consider the advisability of ensuring that the reform of the tax system is integrated and harmonized with the review and reform of the Canadian system of social security.

My motion has three themes to this point. The first is that our tax system needs to ensure that we have the revenue needed to provide for the social programs we have deemed necessary so as to ensure that all Canadians can live at a reasonable level of security and dignity.

The second aspect of this motion revolves around the use of the tax system in social policy administration. The tax system has been used over the years as an integral way of ensuring the

administration of social policy through various different measures, tax credits and so on.

The third aspect of the motion deals with the issue of the unfair tax burdens and tax implications on Canadians who are moving off social programs into the workforce. I will deal with each of these separately.

To date, the focus of the government as it looks at social programs, as it was for the previous Progressive Conservative government and following the wishes of the Reform Party, has been to focus on cuts to expenditures and programs, cuts to people, cuts to those most vulnerable, the poorest in society. That has been the focus of the government's attention to social programs.

It is worth pointing out that the Bloc Quebecois has made many important contributions against that approach, arguing as the New Democratic Party would, for a more holistic, a more people oriented approach to social policy reform. I thank the members of the Bloc Quebecois for that.

The government has placed no emphasis on solving the problem. The problem is that the economy simply does not work for more than four million Canadians because these people do not work in the paid workforce, not through any fault of their own but because the government has not made a priority of job creation. Neither did the government before it.

No emphasis has been placed on making the economy work, giving Canadians the opportunity for the jobs they so sorely need in order to feed themselves and their families and make a contribution to our society. As a result of this, we have seen an increase in social program payments because of the large numbers of Canadians who have been unable to find work.

In addition, there has been no emphasis by the government or any emphasis from the previous government on ensuring a progressive, fair tax system even though this is recognized in the budget. Indeed one of the budget quotes from the government says that the fundamental basis of a sound tax system is the reality and perception that everybody pays his or her fair share.

That may be the perception but clearly it is not something the government has seen fit to do anything about. We continue with a tax system which is unfair to most ordinary Canadians because it loads the tax burden on middle and lower income Canadians while allowing those who are wealthiest and our largest corporations essentially to get a free ride.

We need some action in a holistic way to deal with our social programs. They are there for those who need them. Those who need them have grown in numbers because our economy is simply not working for them. We also have a tax system which unfairly burdens middle and lower income Canadians. Essentially we have seen no action from the government on this measure even though in opposition they frequently criticized the Conservative government for its regressive tax changes.

Private Members' Business

I would just like to point out too that Canadians are concerned about the speed of social policy reform and its implications. They are concerned the government is focusing only on cuts to social programs, cuts in the order of billions of dollars, with inadequate consultation and inadequate consideration of the major impact this will have both on the provinces but more important, on those Canadians who need those programs.

In spite of the advice to the contrary from the government's own advisers, it continues to make ad hoc social program changes while trying to consider the overall picture.

(1245)

One member of the task force of the Minister of Human Resources Development, Mr. Ken Battle, proposes a moratorium on changes to social programs and changes to the income tax system until a comprehensive in-depth review of those programs has been conducted. That advice of the government's own adviser is not being taken.

Going to the tax system itself, we have seen nine years of Conservative government focusing on cutting expenditures to deal with the debt and deficit problems that Canada faces. We see governments across the country, Conservative and Liberal governments, focusing in that same way. We see New Democratic governments balancing budgets without cuts to social programs.

My own province of Saskatchewan cut the deficit from the highest per capita to the lowest in three years, the very best deficit cutting record of any province or any government in the country, according to all the reports of financial managers who are not normally friends of the New Democratic Party. In addition it has increased spending on social programs and health care.

It is not necessary to attack the deficit by attacking those who are most vulnerable in society. The New Democratic Government of Saskatchewan has proven that to all Canadians. Anybody who would rather live in Alberta with Ralph Klein's slash and burn deficit cutting than in Saskatchewan is probably somebody making hundreds of thousands of dollars a year in income.

The debt as we know was not caused by social programs. Statistics Canada has indicated many times that half the debt Canada has faced since 1975, which is when the debt became a major problem, was due to tax breaks and tax loopholes for wealthy individual Canadians or about 50 per cent. Forty-four per cent was due to high interest rates; only 6 per cent to increases in government spending, and of that 6 per cent only 3 per cent was for social programs spending.

The problem has not been social programs spending. It has been a weak tax system, a tax system that has favoured the rich. After all, the rich have their own political parties in the House

that have served them well by providing them with this very favourable tax situation.

Surely, if we are to attack the problem, we need to attack the regressiveness of our tax system. More than \$140 billion in corporate taxes, for example, have gone untaxed in the last nine years. Eighty corporations each owe \$100 million or more in deferred taxes. Workers often pay more taxes than the companies they work for. New Democrats and Canadians think it is time the government at least treated corporations as they treat other Canadians.

Why not impose a minimum corporate tax? Even Ronald Reagan imposed a minimum corporate tax. Why not charge interest on deferred taxes which are outstanding on the part of these corporations? Why not pursue more aggressively those companies that are deliberately avoiding paying their taxes?

Let us look at one example of the implications of the unfair tax system. If Imperial Oil had paid its 1992 deferred tax bill of \$1.58 billion, we could have created 600,000 child care spaces in the country or we could have built 54,000 social housing units. The costs to Canadians are significant as a result of a tax system which favours the rich. It also ensures that middle and lower income Canadians pay an unfair proportion of taxes and that there are not enough resources available to deal with the social program costs required as a result of the fact the economy is not working for four million Canadians.

Another example which we know well in Canada is that of the family trust. It is an example in which the richest Canadian families are able to escape taxation while others have to go to the food bank to beg for food. Estimates indicate that over a billion dollars a year are lost to the federal treasury as a result of giving Canada's richest families a tax break that enables them to hide their tax benefits.

This tax benefit was introduced by the Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau and was extended by the government of Prime Minister Mulroney.

(1250)

It is an outrage that Canadians are faced with a tax system which gives the richest Canadians huge tax breaks while it forces the poorest Canadians to go to food banks to find food.

There are many other tax loopholes that could be eliminated. We have seen some attention in the government's budget paid to the business entertainment tax deduction. More could be done there. Another half a billion dollars could be saved as a result of closing that loophole. I do not see why my constituents who cannot afford to get to Toronto to watch a Blue Jays game should subsidize business people who are entertaining their friends in skyboxes at the SkyDome. There is a clear inequity in that process.

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We should eliminate special tax breaks enjoyed by real estate developers. To give real estate developers tax breaks on an imagined depreciation of their assets when in fact their assets are increasing in value is a perverse gift to the richest of Canadians. We see very large wealthy development companies paying no or very low rates of corporate tax.

We should eliminate the tax breaks for corporate mergers and acquisitions. There is absolutely no gain to the average Canadian there. These three tax breaks to the very wealthy would save another billion dollars for Canadians and provide more resources for the social programs we need.

I could go on. We could tax wealth. We could clamp down on tax cheaters. As I mentioned we could put a minimum corporate tax on corporations to ensure they at least pay something.

I have made my point that our tax system is unfair, balanced in favour of the wealthy who have had political parties and continue to have political parties in the House working for them, and unfairly harsh on middle and lower income Canadians who have seen their taxes increase significantly over the last few years.

It is time, if Liberal words mean anything and if Liberal words in opposition mean anything, to make some changes to ensure that Canadians do not see this matter continue.

Briefly my second point is with regard to the use of the tax system for social policy implementation. It has a long tradition in Canada. It can work well if those tax changes are progressive. However, it works badly if those tax changes are regressive.

Mr. Ken Battle, an adviser of the Minister of Human Resources Development, has pointed out over the years that progressive changes to social programs and tax policy have been undermined consistently by regressive changes under the past government. The only significant change in the first budget of the Liberal government was to get rid of the lifetime capital gains exemption. There is perhaps \$12 billion lost to the treasury as a result of high tax deductions for RRSPs which only the wealthy can take advantage of and child care expenses that favour well-off taxpayers.

We have also seen how our tax system has impacted on our social programs in a way in which most Canadians have not realized until well after the fact. The minister's own adviser, Ken Battle, calls this politics of stealth. We are seeing that same politics of stealth carrying on under this government, although its members criticized it extensively when in opposition.

We see universal child and elderly benefits no longer existing as a result of the clawbacks imposed on old age pensions and family allowances. We see a replacement of family allowances based on an income tested child tax benefit, all things that were

criticized by the Liberals in opposition, all things they continue to allow to take place in government.

Lastly we see the impact of partial deindexation which is catching ever more lower income Canadians in its net, excluding them from social programs and placing them in ever higher tax brackets.

It is necessary for the Minister of Human Resources Development, in conjunction with the Minister of Finance, to take charge of the issue to make sure that tax policy as it impacts on social policy is progressive, helpful to those who are experiencing difficulties in our society, and contributes, as the government's own words indicate, to a fairer tax system so that we can all be satisfied the tax system is fair and that we are paying our fair share as is everyone else.

My last point deals with something about which there has been much loose talk.

(1255)

As with the previous government, this government is fond of talking about deterrents to work which can be addressed by reducing the social programs for people who are not working. The biggest deterrent to work, as every Canadian will say, is that there are not enough jobs with adequate wages. If we address that problem we also address not only our deficit problem but our social programs. We would simply not have as many Canadians drawing on social program expenditures.

There are significant practical problems to be addressed dealing with moving off social programs, social assistance or unemployment insurance, and into the workforce. This has been described as being a welfare roll. Thousands of welfare recipients each year are blocked from moving into the workforce because of the adverse economic consequences that would give rise to, the so-called welfare taxback in which those who move off social programs experience the very highest marginal rate of income tax in the country. Either 100 per cent or something very close to it is taxed back from them on earnings they make as they attempt to move from social assistance to the workforce.

Many Canadians who are on the verge of moving from social assistance to work and are able to earn a bit of money on social assistance lose a dollar of welfare assistance for every dollar they earn. That is the highest rate of marginal tax in the country on the very poorest of Canadians. Of course it is an outrage.

We have also seen the value of refundable tax benefits and GST being determined by net income. As a person leaves social assistance they lose those programs. We have to ensure that is not a deterrent, as it presently is, to moving off social assistance and into the workforce. We have to ensure that our tax policies at the federal and provincial levels and our welfare policy fit together so that we encourage wherever possible, wherever

there are jobs, those people who can fill them to move off social assistance into the job market.

We have to ensure that the transition period from social assistance or unemployment insurance into the workforce is a smooth one and is possible for Canadians to make. We have to take notice of the high cost of working for some families as they move from social assistance into the workforce.

In conclusion, it is incumbent upon the Minister of Human Resources Development to work with the provinces to ensure these transitional arrangements are smooth and encourage participation in the workforce.

The motion brings together the important points on how we deal with one of the most serious problems in our country: how to find the resources necessary to ensure that those who are not part of the paid workforce live in security and dignity. Surely that is a role of any democratic and decent society.

We have to ensure that our tax system is fair, that those who can pay do pay, and that we close tax loopholes which would bring in, as I have indicated, billions of dollars that could be used on social programs. We have to ensure that tax policy as it affects social policy is progressive and that the transition from social assistance or unemployment insurance into the workforce is a smooth one.

This is not easy but with political will to solve this problem it can certainly be achieved as it has been in many other countries.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased when I read the motion. In the beginning I searched to see whether it was from the member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing or put forward by the Minister of Human Resources Development.

[*Translation*]

Of course, as we know, the two hon. members have the same surname, and that has caused some confusion. I thank the hon. member opposite for fully supporting this government's policy, seeing that by and large, what he is proposing in his motion is in fact what this government is seeking, and indeed has undertaken, to do.

(1300)

[*English*]

I am sure the hon. member across has read the red book. I say that because of the way his motion is written. He has inspired himself with Liberal policies. I am very glad though that he has

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done so. I do not agree with the text of his presentation to the House today but I do agree with his motion.

For instance, today he complimented the provincial government of Saskatchewan for its social policy. My very distinguished colleague from the riding of Prince Albert has just informed me that a number of hospitals were closed in his riding alone. Can you imagine that? That is the kind of policy that gets praise from the member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing.

He also complimented the NDP generally. I am sure it was an oversight on his part. I cannot for the life of me think of anyone wanting to compliment Bob Rae for any of his policies, particularly social policy, job creation policy and tax policy, in the province where you and I have the honour and privilege to represent constituents, namely the province of Ontario.

In my area in Ontario we have seen the devastation of NDP provincial policies. We have seen what they have done to our area. It is more than a passing coincidence that every single NDP candidate, every single NDP MP in Ontario without exception, was soundly defeated. That tells you something. The NDP in my riding got approximately 4 per cent of the votes. That tells you what the people thought of that party.

I get back to the motion because it is a good motion. I want to read portions of the red book. I know that all members of the House will consider it a privilege. Reading from page 22 of the red book, let me read the following:

The federal and provincial governments share common problems of too much government debt, too much foreign owned debt, and too high borrowing requirements, domestically and internationally. All three levels of government put the burden of these problems on the same taxpayer who is subject to taxes on income, capital and consumption. To this list governments add other charges in the form of licences, permits, user fees, and additional payroll deductions. A Liberal government will work closely with the provincial governments to achieve maximum possible co-ordination of tax policies.

That is just the kind of thing that is advocated in the motion. I read further, Mr. Speaker, from the red book because I know that you would want me to do this. It says the following:

In the first session of the new Parliament the Liberal government will give the all party finance committee of the House of Commons a 12-month mandate to consult fully with Canadians and provincial governments and to report on the ways to achieve tax fairness, simplicity and harmonization.

That is the exact thing that is asked for in the motion. Let me read the motion a little bit here. It says:

That the government should consider the advisability of ensuring that the reform of the tax system is harmonized and integrated with review and reform—

And so on. This is exactly what our government is doing. I am sorry I was interrupted in my reading of the red book and we should never do that to the red book. I continue:

In particular, the committee will be mandated to report on all options for alternatives to the current GST. A Liberal government will replace the GST with a system

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that generates equivalent revenues, is fairer to consumers, to small business, minimizes disruption to small business and promotes federal-provincial fiscal co-operation and harmonization.

[*Translation*]

So, you see, Mr. Speaker, that is what the Liberal Party was suggesting during the last election campaign and we, of course, had made our intentions known in the red book, from which I have just quoted.

(1305)

But that is not all, Mr. Speaker. As you know, earlier this year, the Minister of Finance tabled a budget, a budget that this House has passed.

In this budget, we have made good our promises, if not all at least most of our election promises, and this just in the first year of our mandate. So, you see, Mr. Speaker, I think that on the strength of this first budget alone, this government would deserve to be re-elected. Of course, in the years to come, we will give the public many more reasons to re-elect us, as the hon. members opposite will learn to appreciate.

In our red book, and again in the budget, we promised to bring the deficit down to 3 per cent of GDP within three years. There it is, in the budget.

Also in the budget: to implement a national program to renew infrastructure; restore funding for the National Literacy Program; establish a Youth Service Corps; provide new youth internship and apprenticeship programs; improve access to capital for small business; replace the GST; re-institute the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program; create a Canadian information highway. As you can see, Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on. Perhaps I should: set up a Technology Partnership Program; launch an Engineers and Scientists Program, and so on.

These are all things that we had promised in the red book, electoral promises that we are acting on.

There are two main thrusts. The first one is to make the tax system better, more balanced and more in line with our social programs.

I will now outline the second.

[*English*]

The hon. Minister of Human Resources Development proposed to this House a change in the system in which we deliver social programs. Much to the chagrin of some opposition members, we are proceeding to do exactly what the motion is asking us.

The Minister of Human Resources Development has mandated a committee to do some work. Stage one of that will be hearings by this committee, federal-provincial and territorial labour market and social services ministers to meet and to discuss this, later on a task force to advise the minister and then an action plan to be drafted and presented in this House.

I congratulate the member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing for supporting so wholeheartedly the policies of our government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup): Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a member of the committee responsible for reviewing the social program reform action plan of the Minister of Human Resources Development and, unlike the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, I think that the vision of Mr. Chris Axworthy, the hon. member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing, is much broader than that of his namesake, the Minister of Human Resources Development.

His motion, in favour of which I will speak, has only one flaw in our eyes: it should be more proactive since the hon. member says that "the government should consider the advisability of ensuring that the reform of the tax system is harmonized."

I myself think that the government must ensure that the reform of the tax system is harmonized, and I think it is important to make that clear because the current approach used by the Minister of Human Resources Development in this area is no guarantee of future success and because he announces changes, to the Unemployment Insurance Program in particular, even before his reform initiative is in place, and it is clear that there is no harmony between the budget and the objectives, and the way social program reform is being conducted.

So we obviously support the proposal of the hon. member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing, since the Bloc Québécois has been calling for tax reform since the election. This issue was part of our election platform and we think it is important to harmonize the two elements, namely the tax system and social security programs, regardless of our opinion on how to approach social program reform in the future. Be it the Reform Party or the Liberals, I think that, in this respect, everybody will admit that we need a little more harmony. I believe that, at the present time, there is a serious lack of co-ordination on the part of the government, and a warning such as the one the member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing is proposing is in order.

(1310)

It seems to us that the planned social program reform might create more inconsistencies if it does not take the tax system into account. We will end up with the same counterproductive situations we saw in the past, where we gave people incentives to increase their income but these same incentives discouraged them from working and being productive members of society. Harmonization is a must.

We must harmonize because the present government does not seem in any hurry to deal with some elements of the tax system which impact on the reform of social programs. I am referring to family trusts, for instance. We can reform all the social programs in the world, but if we do not take care of the revenue

side of things, making sure that everybody pays their fair share, we are not doing our job as a government, as a Parliament.

In 1969, there were \$18 billion in family trusts. In 1982, there were \$80 billion. The potential growth of those trusts should encourage us to check to see what today, in 1994, the exact amounts involved are, to determine why these people pay no taxes and to find ways of obtaining a reasonable amount of tax revenues from those trusts. After all, they belong to a few very rich families, as Mr. Claude Piché said in *La Presse* on January 19, 1994, when he explained that the creation of a trust is a very complex and costly process which is not really worthwhile unless you have a real fortune.

Therefore, on the question of family trusts, it would be interesting to know exactly what is going on as soon as possible because since 1983–84, we have not been able to find out what funds are in there. In my view, the government should take a close look at its own actions on that issue and publish the exact figures as soon as possible.

Tax reform also seems very important because the tax structure must be fair for everybody. We should make our tax tables much less regressive because right now taxes do not serve justice and equity in our society and there is a lot to be done in that area. The present government is saying nothing and does not seem to be really willing to make the necessary changes; it is burying its head in the sand.

There is also the issue of tax shelters that need to be abolished. There would be a lot of work to be done just to determine which shelters should be maintained and which should be abolished. In that sense, the motion of the hon. member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing is very interesting and it is a needed reminder for the government which seems to forget that what it does on the one hand does not necessarily agree with what it does on the other.

The other important element is that the fiscal structure must be harmonized to take income security into consideration. There are examples from the past which demonstrate that income tax tables can be used to help low-income earners. In Quebec, Mr. Parizeau, when he was Minister of Finance, made sure that low-income families would pay no income tax. That kind of initiative should be taken by the current government, which seems to be forgetting its electoral promises to the neediest and more inclined to protect those who financed its electoral campaign.

We therefore consider it important to support the motion of the hon. member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing. There are also a few other things that I would like the government to take into consideration when harmonizing, and one is a minimum corporate tax. There is no doubt that Canadian tax policy is very

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favourable to business. Naturally, businesses should be allowed to develop, but at the same time we have to avoid an imbalance between the share individual taxpayers must bear and that of business. In that area, I think we have a long way to go.

(1315)

Another thing I would like to mention are the changes to fiscal arrangements that apply to foreign corporations. For example, in 1990, taxpayers with incomes of over \$80,000 accounted for more than 70 per cent of all taxable capital gains, and 66 per cent of those were investors. We in the Bloc Québécois believe that the financial position of the government requires a larger contribution of high income taxpayers, and in the spirit of this motion we could, at the very least, undertake a thorough study of this aspect, to make sure that in the future, the tax policy and the forthcoming reform of social programs guarantee some harmonization between the two and that, in effect, we do not create situations that are even more absurd than the ones we now have.

I would like to add that when the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell quoted from the red book, it reminded me of a saying my grandfather was fond of. Do not judge people by what they say but by what they do. It is particularly true with the Liberals' election platform. During the campaign, all they promised were jobs, jobs, jobs, but they have yet to deliver. The Liberals made a lot of commitments concerning social equity in the red book, but they have not achieved much. And worst of all, they do not seem to have the will to forge ahead in this area.

To conclude, I would like to say that, unlike the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, I do not see how you can compare the motion put forward by the hon. member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing with the position taken by the Minister of Human Resources Development. There is a fundamental difference between the two in that the minister tends to act a bit like a bulldozer these days. However, he may be realizing that provinces have some rights in this area and will expect the government to respect them.

The public also want things to be done legally and has shown in the past that if governments are divorced from the realities of their constituents, voters can remind them of the harsh realities come election time. I think that a motion like the one before the House today should prompt the government to review the need for more harmonization at the Cabinet level, which would allow people to share their ideas and dovetail their programs.

[English]

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the bill that has been put forward by the hon. member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing. The tax system does need to be reformed. How can anyone disagree with that broad goal of income security for all Canadians?

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The disagreement, however, comes on these two questions: How should the tax system be reformed, and what constitutes social and income security?

Let me deal with the second question first. What is social and income security? In the minds of most Canadians it can only exist in a society in which there are good jobs with good incomes. That is the bottom line. To have good jobs there must exist good investment opportunities and there must be good rates of return or profit. Without that we will not have good jobs in this country. Such a society must also have an environmentally sound, financially viable economy alongside a supportive, responsive public services sector.

How do we get on the right road to achieving this objective for our society? How do we get there from here? There are many areas that need to be reformed. Reforming our tax system would be a major variable in the equation.

What kind of tax reform is needed? Our current system with its unjustifiably high taxes is a wedge, one that is being driven between Canadians eager to be fruitful, prosperous and just and the ultimate goal of achieving a socially and income insecure society. It is a wedge that is being driven between the intentions and the realization of that goal.

(1320)

What is the real culprit? Why is the current system of high taxes a problem? These unfair high taxes are only a symptom of a bigger inherently related problem. We cannot separate the two.

What is the real problem? The real root that necessitates high taxes and prevents us from achieving the kind of society which we really want is government fiscal irresponsibility. We consistently spend more money than is brought in. These high taxes are detestable and they are a wedge that is coming between the ambitions of Canadians and the realization of their goals.

The driving force that forces up taxes and that fuels the underground economy and that causes unnecessarily high unemployment and makes businesses and jobs pack up and flee the country and creates social unrest and crime and a general loss of confidence in our whole country drives up interest rates and depreciates our currency.

The root cause is the fact that as a country we have lost control of our finances. We spend too much. Let us not blame anybody. We are in this together. High taxes are destroying jobs and they are destroying social programs because they destroy the initiative of the people and their desire to invest and work.

The common sense of the common people could have foretold us our fate. Do we seriously believe we can continually spend more money than we bring in? Can we keep borrowing from our neighbours, from businesses and from other countries? Someone, some time, has to pay.

Many of my hon. colleagues from the other parties in this House will on almost every subject in this House Reformers talk about the same thing, fiscal responsibility. Why are they stuck on that? Let me explain why.

We are focused on the financial matters of this country because we want Canada to decide its own future and not destroy it. We want Canada to have the best social programs and infrastructure, the most beautiful environment, the best jobs and incomes for its people. We are not going to get it the way we are going now. We cannot achieve a socially and income secure society for ourselves and for our families and future generations by continually demanding more.

We cannot withdraw from what will happen. We will eventually deny ourselves and our children everything that we are trying to preserve. We have to decide now how we are going to adjust our lifestyles, that we are going to tighten our belts and that we are going to expect less. It is really a cruel hoax on all our fellow Canadians to let them think that we can continue as we are. It is wrong.

It is a lot of fun to talk about spending, talk about social programs, to talk about women's rights and minority rights and immigrant rights and refugee rights, criminal rights, language rights, universal social programs like health care and day care and many other noble causes which some other group might feel is deserving money. It is fun to talk about those things and plan. The final result is that somebody has to pay.

Occasionally we may sound apocalyptic when we talk about our nation's finances. Perhaps things will turn around. Maybe it will happen some day. Maybe it will happen soon. Perhaps our debt crisis will not become drastically worse. Maybe we will look back in 50 years from now at this session of Parliament and on the continual attention that Reformers gave to the government finances as overkill. Maybe we will look back and see it as that.

I sincerely hope that happens. If it does it means we have done one thing, that we were able to control spending and taxes and bring in real fiscal reform. At the present time we are in a free fall. We are plunging downward. We are skydiving without any intention of opening our parachutes.

(1325)

I agree with the motion. Let us reform our tax system. Let us reform the GST. Let us slash personal income tax, corporate tax and payroll tax. Let us pretend for a moment that all gov-

ernments were able to cut taxes; federal, provincial and property. Would Canadians not love us? We would be heroes. We would go from being one of the highest taxed countries in the developing world to one of the least taxed.

What would Canadians do with all the money that previously went to government? One can only imagine and we should imagine. Canadians want to be freer. Canadians want to be free to decide what to do with all their hard earned money. What if the government kept its greedy, grimy tentacles out of the people's pockets?

Governments often have a philosophy that they have some absolute sense to know what is best for people. It is deceitful, it is dishonest and it is immoral. That ideology has manifested itself in the extreme repression of the former East Germany, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the Soviet Union, just to name a few. Such regimes were ruled by elites, elites who believed very strongly that they had the ultimate answer for a perfect society, indeed for a perfect world. Because of this elitist attitude they taxed to the max. Poor, hard working citizens had to pay the bills. There was very little regard for them. Their mental skills were seen as inferior.

If Canadians felt that the government was spending their hard earned dollars in a responsible way and that these programs were good for all Canadians, they would jump on board. However, Canadians see governments misspending their money and they feel things are out of control.

Canadians see government responding to policies and programs and funding any group or cause that will keep them in power. Our current system allows a majority government to implement policies to a myriad of controversial programs. Quite frankly, the government simply does not have a mandate for these programs.

One example is the bilingual-multiculturalism notions that the government is inflicting on the nation. We have never had a referendum on official bilingualism or official multiculturalism. We simply have to accept these policies because the elites have told us it is good for us.

When we question them we always get: "If you don't like it, five years down the road you can throw us out". However, if our leaders are accountable only every five years and not every day they end up representing the people only once every five years.

The essence of democracy is that we must be accountable every day. We are usurping individual freedoms, choices and responsibilities in favour of some elitist version of "what is best for them". The guiding hand must come from the bottom not from the top. We need government to promote law and order, but the big disagreement comes over how and what amount of government we have. The Reformers call it the legitimate role of government.

The legitimate role of government is to do for people only what needs to be done for them or they cannot do at all or as well

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individually or through non-government organizations. That is the legitimate role of government. If we want to have the best tax system in the world we must look at our expenditures. We must finance only those services that Canadians cannot provide for themselves or through non-government agencies.

In order to do that we must also have a different attitude toward government and a different attitude by our government toward ordinary Canadians. That is the only way we are going to have real tax reform.

Mr. Gordon Kirkby (Prince Albert—Churchill River): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise on this motion that has been brought forward by the member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing.

In his motion he suggests that while the reform of the tax system needs to go ahead, it needs also to be harmonized and integrated with the reform of the Canadian system of social security.

If we look at what is involved in reforming a tax system and what is involved in reforming a social security system we can see some very complicated and very difficult, long and tedious hard work to do.

(1330)

For instance, if we look at the GST, a very small portion of the taxation system that is now being reviewed with a view to changing it and making it better, we see that hours and hours of study need to go into it, consultation, hearing from the people affected by it.

It would seem even this small area within the taxation system that needs to be reviewed takes a lot of work. We can imagine the effort it is going to take to completely review the entire tax system.

At the same time, with the social safety net review the Minister of Human Resource Development has begun an unprecedented consultation across this nation with provinces, with citizens across this country to find out what they are thinking about these issues, what the problems are, what the needs of Canadians are.

In this motion it is suggested that these two massive reviews be brought together. I see a lot of danger in this. This proposition in my view would delay reform in an interminable fashion, years to complete this type of integrated review.

I am not saying that there is not overlap in specific areas between the taxation system and the social safety net system. For instance, we have the child tax benefit, child care expense deduction, the personal pension income credit, the age credit, the disability tax credit, the medical expense tax credit and there are certain other tax measures for people who have disabilities within the taxation system which assist with the social safety net.

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Where there are these links, they can be dealt with on their own. There does not have to be a complete linking of these reviews. What is so dangerous about this is that we can see that our present welfare system and much of our social safety net system are designed and have created dependencies across this country.

Welfare and a lot of the housing and things like that, all the things that have gone together to compose the social safety net, have become a prison from which people cannot escape.

I have gone around my riding a number of times before the election and after the election. When I talk to people who are on social assistance there is no doubt that they want to work. What is the biggest inhibitor to going to work? It is the dependency and the rules created and put in force dealing with welfare that keep people from being able to earn money, that keep people from using their initiative and drive to make better lives for themselves and their families, that keep people from having the dignity that comes with having a job and putting bread on the table.

What worries me is that if these two major reforms are brought together the pace of reform is going to slow down to nothing. Then perhaps that is what the hon. member who is proposing the motion wants. Perhaps he wishes to keep a system in place that is going to prevent people from getting away from the dependencies that have been created by this very system.

That cannot happen in this nation. It cannot happen in my riding. There are too many people who have been asking for

years for the opportunity to get out of the system that presently holds them captive. We cannot take a chance that this type of reform will be derailed, that it will be stalled.

We want to see a simplified tax system. We want to see an equitable tax system. We want to see the deficit go down. The Liberal Party has stated that it wishes to see the debt go down to 3 per cent of the GDP within the first three years, but we want to see people go back to work. We have undertaken a number of initiatives to achieve that, whether it is our infrastructure program, whether it is a number of the small business initiatives, or whether it is other initiatives designed to get people back to work.

I do not think we should delay what we are going to do any longer. I think the motion is designed to do exactly that, not to allow another generation to go forth before getting rid of a system that creates dependency. The people need to be free to succeed and the Government of Canada is committed to making that happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired. Pursuant to Standing Order 96(1), the order is dropped from the Order Paper.

It being 1.38 p.m. the House stands adjourned until next Monday at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 1.38 p.m.)

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