



CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 140 • NUMBER 095 • 1st SESSION • 38th PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, May 10, 2005

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, May 10, 2005

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the government's response to five petitions.

* * *

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present in both official languages the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade on the ongoing tensions along the Eritrea-Ethiopia border.

[*English*]

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. John Williams (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts concerning governance and the Public Service of Canada, ministerial and deputy ministerial accountability.

In accordance with Standing Order 109, your committee requests a government response within 120 days.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

[*Translation*]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-380, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code (pregnant or nursing employees).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to introduce my first bill in this House, a bill to amend the Canada Labour Code for pregnant or nursing employees.

This bill amends the Canada Labour Code to allow the employee to avail herself of provincial legislation on preventive withdrawal from work.

This bill has earned the support of the hon. member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, the Bloc Québécois labour critic.

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

[*English*]

The Speaker: The Chair has indications that two members wish to move motions. Could the hon. member for Nunavut tell us which motion on the order paper she wishes to propose to the House?

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell: Motion No. 26, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, I will be endeavouring to move the motion which I have tried to move for a week or more now. It is Motion No. 36 dealing with restoring an opposition day on May 19.

The Speaker: The hon. member has probably realized the bad news from his point of view. We will go with the one that is higher on the list.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I move that the third report of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, presented to the House on Friday, March 11, be concurred in.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to split my time with the member for Yukon.

As we know, this report from the aboriginal affairs committee presented to the House on March 11 concerns the Inuit sled dogs and the request to have a judicial inquiry.

We heard from different witnesses who came before the committee of how important this was for the people of the north. It not only concerns people from my riding but it also concerns people from northern Quebec.

Routine Proceedings

We are known as one group of people under, as I like to say, the umbrella of aboriginal people of Canada who are recognized by the Constitution. We are one of the three groups, which is the first nations, the Inuit and the Métis, who are recognized by the Constitution of Canada.

The Inuit have always considered themselves as one group of people, even though we are in Labrador, northern Quebec, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

We know that our history is very recent. In the 1950s and 1960s people were still living out on the land and were very reluctant to move into the communities. They feel that one of the ways that the Government of Canada tried to get them moved to the communities was to get rid of their transportation, which is the reason for the motion. The people of the north feel there needs to be a judicial inquiry into exactly what the motivation was behind the Inuit dogs being slaughtered in the 1950s and 1960s.

We have firsthand interventions and firsthand witnesses who went through that and they would very much like the government to appoint a judge to look into the slaughter. People need the chance to tell their stories and find out exactly what the reason was behind doing this and whether there can be some reconciliation between themselves and the Government of Canada.

I would like to give the member for Yukon an opportunity to speak.

• (1010)

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I heard the member talk about the motion that the government wants to debate today, or maybe not.

I would ask the member whether her heart is really into debating this motion or whether this is just another attempt to shut down the motion that our House leader is trying to put forward and have a vote on.

This has been going on for far too long. I think it is becoming quite obvious to Canadians that the constant actions of the Liberal government in putting forward motions such as this is nothing more than an attempt to suppress democracy in this House. I would like to ask if this is another attempt.

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to say that I am splitting my time with the member for Kitchener Centre.

I think most of the members in this House of Commons who have been here in the almost eight years that I have been a member know that I do not get up to do a lot of trivial debate. I think my record speaks for itself. If there are issues that are very important to the first peoples of Canada I will take the opportunity to stand and be their voice in the House of Commons.

I think members can count the number of times that I have stood to debate in this House of Commons and it will only be on issues that are felt strongly by the people who I represent. I think my record will speak for itself.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to, in any way, downplay the seriousness of the hon. member's issue that deals with the Standing Committee on

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development's study on the slaughtering of Inuit sled dogs in the north between the years 1950 and 1970 and requesting that the government appoint, before April 15, 2005, which, if memory serves me right has already passed, a superior court judge to inquire into the matter.

That is not the issue here, as my colleague from Cariboo—Prince George said. The issue here is shutting down democracy in this place.

If the member is serious about having a debate about this issue then I would assume that when she called this issue today it was not a stalling tactic to prevent the opposition from having an opposition day, which was my motion.

I see someone running over to apprise the hon. member from Nunavut as to what she should say when she rises. However if she is serious about this issue then I am sure the Liberals will not be planning to adjourn the debate on this. If she is serious about this issue and they called this concurrence motion, then we should debate it for the three hours, as the opposition would want to do.

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell: Mr. Speaker, I find it quite amusing in a way that in the eight years that I have been here we have never had debates lasting three hours on any concurrence of any report that I know of in the numbers that we are doing it in this session.

If the party across the way is as serious about aboriginal peoples as they say, they would have supported the Tlicho land claims agreement that was before the House in December. To this day, in the eight years that I have been here, I have never seen the party under all their different names support a land claims agreement.

Also, in this very committee the members opposite from the Conservative Party were told and requested by the Assembly of First Nations, AFN, not to go ahead with the motion. In a way I can honestly say that we are the people over here who speak for the aboriginal people of Canada. The Conservatives do not support even the direction given by the Assembly of First Nations when they are requested to do so.

Again, we see that as they know best what is good for us as the people of Canada. Frankly, I do not agree with that.

• (1015)

Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That this question be now put.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion is that this question be now put.

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been around here for about 12 years and have never seen a performance like this. When the first member spoke on this motion, we asked if this was just a ploy to block the putting forward of a motion by our House leader. She assured us that it was not. We thought that perhaps we were going to have some debate on it.

Our House leader again asked the question of that member and she assured us that this was a legitimate motion. Then the first thing that happened when the time switched over to the government whip was that she stood up and made a motion that the question be put.

Routine Proceedings

I feel as if my parliamentary privileges are being usurped by the government whip. I was prepared to debate this motion on aboriginal affairs—

Hon. Karen Redman: Then debate it.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Go ahead.

Mr. Richard Harris: —and we will be, Mr. Speaker, if we are allowed to.

Mr. Jay Hill: Why isn't she if it's serious?

Mr. Richard Harris: I would like to ask the government whip, is she serious? Is this going to be a motion that we will have an opportunity to debate in the House right now for the full period of the debate?

Hon. Karen Redman: Mr. Speaker, I am certainly happy to get up and respond to that. Less than a year ago, Canadians sent a minority government here with the understanding that they wanted us to make this government work. There is no doubt that for the vast majority of people in this House this is a new experience. The Standing Orders changed about the middle of March. That was done very much the way it has been done historically in this place. It was done with consultation of all parties.

Up until about three weeks ago, I would speak daily to my whip counterparts of all parties. We would have a House leaders' meeting once a week where we would talk about how many speakers were coming forward. We would talk about legislation, legislation like the budget. The budget that this government has put before the House is an excellent budget. It responds to the priorities of Canadians. It is a new deal for cities. It invests in child care—

An hon. member: Employment insurance improvements.

Hon. Karen Redman: It invests in employment insurance improvements, which are very important for some of my colleagues. They championed that.

We have allowed a place at the table without giving up the fiscal imperatives that have been the absolute defining character of this Liberal government. There is fiscal balance. We will continue to stay out of deficit. We will continue to pay down the debt. We will continue to bring about tax relief for the lowest income earners in Canada while attending to the small and medium sized business sector, which is the engine that runs the economy, but—

• (1020)

Mr. Charlie Penson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. How is this relevant to the question that is being debated?

An hon. member: The Inuit sled dogs.

Mr. Charlie Penson: Yes, the Inuit sled dogs. I think, Mr. Speaker, you should shut down the current speaker because this is not relevant at all. If she wants to debate the motion, and a question was asked about it—

The Deputy Speaker: I am sure the hon. whip is going to get around to that although she is responding to a question about the timing of the debate. She is responding in trying to answer that. I would urge her to wrap that up. Maybe we will get one more question in.

Hon. Karen Redman: Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for the members opposite. My point is that we have had changes to the Standing Orders. Part of those changes was being able to put forward concurrence motions which would then have three hours of debate.

The Conservatives, the members opposite, took that rule and tried to be sneaky with it. They tried to bring in a motion that would have them decide when opposition days occur. That is the purview of the government and that has always been the purview of the government.

As a result of being able to bring in concurrence motions, the members opposite have chewed up roughly 20% of the time in the House that the government has to talk about important issues such as the budget bill and such as the companion piece which will be introduced in this House.

They are so embroiled in procedural gerrymandering and sneaky tricks that they are not allowing us to talk about things like the relationship this government has forged through several pieces of legislation with our aboriginal communities.

I can look to my tenure as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment and to the pieces of legislation such as species at risk, which was held out as a best practice because we invited aboriginals to the table. We acknowledged their intellectual property, community values and the patterns of wildlife, which was very necessary so that aboriginal community knowledge could be incorporated into legislation.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not going to be drawn into this debate. I think is unfortunate. The House—

Mr. Jay Hill: If you are not going to get drawn into the debate, why did you stand?

Mr. Charlie Penson: Then sit down.

Mr. Paul Szabo: I am not going to be drawn into this debate. The record will show which parties have moved concurrence motions which are by backbenchers who have important issues.

This one came a long time ago. I do have to say that the member for Nunavut has been one of the strongest voices we could ever wish to have on behalf of our first peoples.

An hon. member: That's right.

Mr. Paul Szabo: She is an honourable member of Parliament. I believe that all members in this place would certainly want to give her all of the recognition for her defence of the first nations people, for the land claims and for the rights and the privileges that we should accord to our first nations people; similarly, the member for Yukon.

These are not motions that were put in frivolously. These motions are put in by members because they are important to them. Who better than this member to move this motion?

Routine Proceedings

The House leader for the Conservative Party just yelled over to the whip of the Liberal Party and asked, “What are you doing now wasting time when we could be doing other business?” I believe the point has been made by the hon. member about the importance of this issue and that we should move forward, and I am sure that we will.

With regard to the request of the opposition House leader that we should get on to other business now, I tend to agree. We should start debating the budget. Therefore, I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

• (1025)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1105)

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

(Division No. 79)

YEAS

Members

Adams
Anderson (Victoria)
Augustine
Bains
Bélangier
Bevilacqua
Blondin-Andrew
Bonin
Boudria
Brisson
Brown (Oakville)
Byrne
Carr
Catterall
Chan
Coderre
Comuzzi
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cuzner
Davies
DeVillers
Dosanjh
Dryden
Eyking
Fontana
Godbout
Godin
Graham
Holland

Alcock
Angus
Bagnell
Barnes
Bell
Blaikie
Boivin
Boshcoff
Bradshaw
Broadbent
Bulte
Cannis
Carroll
Chamberlain
Christopherson
Comartin
Crowder
Cullen (Etobicoke North)
D'Amours
Desjarlais
Dhalla
Drouin
Easter
Folco
Galloway
Godfrey
Goodale
Guarnieri
Hubbard

Ianno
Julian
Karetak-Lindell
Khan
LeBlanc
MacAulay
Maloney
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Matthews
McDonough
McGuire
McLellan
Minna
Murphy
Neville
Owen
Paradis
Peterson
Phinney
Proulx
Redman
Robillard
Rota
Savoy
Scott
Siksay
Simard (Saint Boniface)
Smith (Pontiac)
St. Denis
Stoffer
Telegdi
Thibault (West Nova)
Torsney
Valeri
Volpe
Wasylycia-Leis

Jennings
Kadis
Karygiannis
Lastewka
Lee
Macklin
Marleau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse
McCallum
McGuinity
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McTeague
Mitchell
Myers
O'Brien
Pacetti
Patry
Pettigrew
Powers
Ratansi
Regan
Rodriguez
Savage
Scarpaleggia
Sgro
Silva
Simms
St. Amand
Steckle
Szabo
Temelkovski
Tonks
Ur
Valley
Wappel
Wilfert — 132

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Anders
Asselin
Batters
Benoit
Bezan
Blais
Bonsant
Boulianne
Breitkreuz
Brunelle
Carrie
Casey
Chong
Cleary
Crête
Demers
Desrochers
Doyle
Epp
Fitzpatrick
Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)
Gaudet
Goldring
Gouk
Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)
Guergis
Harris
Hill
Jaffer
Johnston
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kotto
Laframboise
Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)
Lemay
Lévesque
Lukiwski
MacKenzie
Mark
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)

Allison
André
Bachand
Bellavance
Bergeron
Bigras
Boire
Bouchard
Bourgeois
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Cardin
Carrier
Casson
Clavet
Côté
Cummins
Deschamps
Devolin
Duceppe
Faille
Forsyth
Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)
Gallant
Gauthier
Goodyear
Grewal (Newton—North Delta)
Guay
Guimond
Harrison
Hinton
Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lalonde
Lavallée
Lessard
Loubier
Lunnery
Marceau
Ménard (Hochelaga)
Menzies

Government Orders

Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Obhrai	Paquette
Penson	Perron
Picard (Drummond)	Plamondon
Poilievre	Poirier-Rivard
Prentice	Preston
Reynolds	Ritz
Roy	Sauvageau
Scheer	Schellenberger
Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Simard (Beauport—Limoilou)
Skelton	Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)
Sorenson	St-Hilaire
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Trost
Tilson	Vellacott
Tweed	Warawa
Vincent	White
Watson	Yelich— 122
Williams	

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1110)

[*English*]

CANADIAN FORCES MEMBERS AND VETERANS RE-ESTABLISHMENT AND COMPENSATION ACT

(Bill C-45. On the Order: Government Orders:)

April 20, 2005—Second reading and reference to the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs of Bill C-45, an act to provide services, assistance and compensation to or in respect of Canadian Forces members and veterans and to make amendments to certain acts.

Hon. Albina Guarnieri (Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, I rise to advance an investment in future veterans, to advance the prospects of a better life for people who have served their country, and to advance a new veterans charter.

There have been discussions among the parties and in keeping with this being the Year of the Veteran, we wish to recognize the debt owed to all our veterans.

[*Translation*]

I believe this is an ideal opportunity to set aside our political differences, on behalf of those who defended our freedom, and get unanimous consent on this motion.

[*English*]

I move:

That Bill C-45, an act to provide services, assistance and compensation to or in respect of Canadian Forces members and veterans and to make amendments to certain acts, be deemed to have been read a second time, referred to committee of the whole, reported without amendment, concurred in at report stage, read a third time and passed.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. minister have unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time, considered in committee, reported, concurred in, read the third time and passed)

The Deputy Speaker: I wish to inform the House that there is one hour and 10 minutes remaining for debate on the previous question related to the motion for concurrence of the third report of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. Accordingly, the debate on the motion will be rescheduled for another sitting.

Mr. Richard Harris: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am sure that you would want to know if there has been a breaking of the rules when it comes to voting. I know that all members who make an effort to come to the House on time for the vote would like to see members opposite do the same.

The Minister of State for Public Health was not in her chair when the motion was read and in fact only took her chair as the Minister for State for Infrastructure and Communities who sits next to her was about to rise to cast his vote. Therefore, I think that she made herself ineligible for the last vote we held.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George for that. The hon. Minister of State for Public Health is not here to respond to that right now, so I do not know that we can deal with it any further at this moment. Perhaps she will come back. The vote was not so close that one vote would have determined anything different anyway, so we will let her come back and respond to that if she wishes.

Mr. Ken Epp: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. If I were in a position to give you advice, which of course I am not, I would advise you that this is a matter of considerable importance because it is precedent setting.

It is true that in this particular instance the vote was not close, but how about the next time if it is? And then to get up and argue that the vote should count anyway because it counted this morning in this particular instance. That vote should, notwithstanding that the minister is not here, in fact be disqualified.

The Deputy Speaker: To reassure the member for Edmonton—Sherwood Park, we do take the issue seriously of course and members do need to be in their seats during the reading of the motion or the bill that is before the House. As I mentioned, we cannot deal further with this until the Minister of State for Public Health responds. We are not finished with this. We will wait for her to respond to it and then we will deal with it appropriately at that time.

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

•(1115)
[English]

PETITIONS

MARRIAGE

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present yet another petition on the subject matter of marriage signed by a number of Canadians including constituents from my riding of Mississauga South. The petitioners would like to draw to the attention of the House that the majority of Canadians believe that fundamental matters of social policy should be decided by elected members of Parliament and not by the unelected judiciary. They also point out that the majority of Canadians have indicated their support for the current legal definition of marriage.

The petitioners therefore call upon Parliament to use all possible legislative and administrative measures including the invocation of section 33 of the charter, commonly known as the notwithstanding clause, to preserve and protect the current definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

MIDDLE EAST

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today to present a petition signed by approximately 2,000 petitioners. It is a petition organized by Naomi Binder Wall from the Jewish Women's Committee to End the Occupation who has been holding a weekly vigil for the past four and a half years.

The petition calls on the Canadian government to speak out against the wall that Israel is constructing on Palestinian land in the West Bank and to demand the Israeli government issue orders to tear it down. I am very pleased to present this petition that is signed by almost 2,000 people in the Toronto area.

WATER CHLORINATION

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions.

In the first petition the petitioners call upon Parliament to instruct the federal environment minister to impose a moratorium on the expanded use of water chlorination in small rural applications until further study on the alternatives are completed.

MARRIAGE

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the second petition the petitioners ask that Parliament put into federal law that the definition of marriage is the lifelong union of one man and one woman.

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Navdeep Bains (Mississauga—Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present the following petition to the House. This petition calls for the amendment to the federal Criminal Code so that Canadian Sikhs can be exempt from an organization's liability on workplace safety. Many Canadian Sikhs who make a living as longshoremen have encountered difficulties and even, to some degree, lost jobs because of a requirement that they wear a hard hat on the job site.

I acknowledge that this is a very delicate matter of freedom of religion and at the same time balancing safety. In that spirit, I would like to present this petition signed by 61 affected Canadians.

CARLEY'S LAW

Mr. Randy White (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have numerous petitions.

I have two petitions in which the petitioners ask the government assembled in Parliament to vote in favour of Bill C-275, an act to amend the Criminal Code regarding failure to stop at the scene of an accident, which would make sentencing for hit-and-run drivers more severe.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Randy White (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have several petitions in which the petitioners ask Parliament to pass legislation to recognize the institution of marriage in federal law as being a lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

CARLEY'S LAW

Mr. Randy White (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, finally, I have many petitioners with regard to Bill C-275, an act to amend the Criminal Code regarding failure to stop at the scene of an accident, which is known commonly as Carley's Law hit-and-run. These petitioners again ask that parliament continue to support that legislation.

AMBASSADOR TO UNESCO

Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a petition signed by a number of Canadians who express concern about the appointment of a former MP of this place, Yvon Charbonneau, as Canada's ambassador to UNESCO. They believe he has made comments that are of concern, that are against the State of Israel and, therefore, need to be dealt with by the Government of Canada.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to urge the Prime Minister to withdraw this appointment and give a clear, unambiguous message in terms of anti-Semitism that is prevalent in our society today.

•(1120)

MARRIAGE

Ms. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today to present a petition to this House with close to 200 names on it from the riding of Simcoe—Grey. The petitioners call upon the government to maintain the definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 120 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 120—**Mr. James Bezan:**

Does the government plan to equip Correctional Service of Canada officers with stab proof vests to wear while on duty in dangerous prison conditions?

Government Orders

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): At the present time, the Correctional Service of Canada, CSC, has protective vests available for correctional officers in all institutions. The vests are issued on a case by case basis following a threat risk assessment of a situation.

CSC has established a joint committee with the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers, UCCO, to review issues concerning protective equipment. This committee is currently in the process of reviewing the various types and styles of stab-resistant vests that would be issued to correctional officers assigned to specific posts in specific institutions.

The circumstances in which these vests will be employed will be clarified in CSC's operational policies.

[English]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE THE MINISTER OF FINANCE TO MAKE CERTAIN PAYMENTS

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (for the Minister of Finance) moved that Bill C-48, an act to authorize the Minister of Finance to make certain payments, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-48 is a bill that proposes further investments from unplanned surplus funds.

Canada's social foundations are a key to our social identity. In past budgets, the Government of Canada has made significant investments in these social priorities and this bill is merely a natural extension of those priorities. It already builds upon government initiatives taken over the past number of years and budgets.

Before outlining the measures contained in this bill, however, I would like to take a moment and talk about how the government is able to make these investments, or how we got from there to here.

As members know, Canada will record its eighth consecutive surplus in the budget year 2004-05, a record unmatched since Confederation. Indeed, Canada will be the only G-7 country to post a total government surplus in that fiscal year. Canada's much improved fiscal situation has allowed the government to make significant investments in the priorities of Canadians.

Our fiscal outlook, however, has not always been so rosy. When we took over the government from the members of the party opposite here, we were faced with a budgetary deficit in excess of \$40 billion. On top of that, the unemployment rate was in the order of 11%. There was weak economic growth and weak consumer

confidence, all brought on by the management so-called of the previous administration.

We recognized that something had to be done if we were to ensure a future for our generations to come. That is exactly what we did.

Our government undertook a series of measures to reduce spending and put our fiscal house in order. By 1997-98 we were able to eliminate the deficit.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that you are a bit of an athlete in your own right and without any pain there is no gain. Canadians clearly made sacrifices in support of a goal of improving our fiscal situation. However, in this case, and I know your athletic endeavours are matters of legend, the pain has paid off big time.

An hon. member: It's no legend.

Hon. John McKay: Possibly not matters of fact, rather than matters of legend, but that is another issue.

Canada's fiscal turnaround was nothing short of remarkable and has certainly not gone unnoticed by other countries that are looking to us as an example of what to do. It was thanks to these sacrifices made by Canadians that consumer and business confidence grew. In turn that led to stronger economic growth and job creation.

Once the fiscal situation turned around, the government put more money in the pockets of individuals and families by reducing taxes more than any other federal government in history. It also invested significantly in the priorities of Canadians, such as health care, education, infrastructure, research and innovation, national security and the environment.

The bill before us today brings those investments in a number of key priorities for Canadians, priorities that the government shares. Specifically, Bill C-48 provides the framework for further investments in important areas, such as affordable housing, post-secondary education, the environment and foreign aid.

Let me assure the House that this in no way will put us in danger of going back into the bad old days of deficits. I emphasize that this will not put this government into deficit.

● (1125)

The government is committed to spending \$4.6 billion for these investments. These investments will be financed from fiscal resources that are in excess of \$2 billion in the fiscal year 2005-06 and \$2 billion in the fiscal year 2006-07. Estimates show that we will still have sufficient resources to continue to pay down the debt as well. I want to again emphasize the point that these investments will only be made in the event there are resources available above the \$2 billion in each of those fiscal years.

I would like to outline the details of these proposed investments for our future.

Government Orders

First, with respect to affordable housing, the government recognizes that Canada's communities are the social and economic foundation of the country. Whether large metropolitan areas, cities or rural hamlets, the communities Canadians choose to live in have significant bearing on the quality of their life and social and economic opportunities open to them. However, the harsh reality is that in downtown cores and poorer neighbourhoods of many cities urban poverty problems have led to increased demand for affordable housing.

In recent years the government has made a number of investments totalling \$2 billion in the area of affordable housing and homelessness. These programs are still being rolled out and in most cases the funding will continue to ramp up over the next year.

We have done the following.

In 1999 the government launched a three year national homelessness initiative. A key element of that was the supporting communities partnership initiative known by most of the people in this area as SCPI, which provided \$305 million for local community groups to offer supportive services and facilities for the homeless.

This initiative was of great importance to the community from which I come as we were housing something in the order of 1,400 homeless people in the riding every night. I am pleased to say that over the years, with the assistance of SCPI and other programs, the number has declined precipitously to the point where we are now somewhere in the order of 200 to 300 people per night. I would like to think the Liberal caucus in particular had a lot to do with that initiative.

Budget 2003 provided a further three year extension to the SCPI initiative at \$135 million per year. Furthermore, budget 2001 announced \$680 million over five years for the affordable housing initiative to help stimulate the creation of more affordable housing. Bilateral cost sharing agreements were subsequently signed with all 13 jurisdictions in Canada. On top of that, \$320 million over five years was announced in budget 2003, bringing total investments in affordable housing to \$1 billion over six years.

The government continued to do more in budget 2003 when it announced a three year renewal of the government's housing renovation programs at a cost of \$128 million per year. These programs support the renovation and the renewal of the existing stock of affordable housing and help low income persons with critical housing repair needs. In addition, the government currently spends \$1.9 billion per year in support of existing social housing units.

The legislation builds on those previous initiatives by proposing a further \$1.6 billion for further affordable housing construction. It is important to emphasize that the funding is not tied to matching funds from the provinces.

In recognition of the critical shortage of adequate housing for our first nations reserves the new funding will also include aboriginal housing. That is \$1.6 billion of the \$4.6 billion initiative.

The second part of the initiative is in the area of post-secondary education, which is and continues to be a priority of the Government

of Canada. We need to provide students with a solid foundation that will serve them well in Canada in the future.

• (1130)

Since balancing the budget, the government has provided significant new funding in support of post-secondary education through increased transfer and support to provinces and territories and increased direct support to students and universities.

For example, federal transfer support for post-secondary education is provided through the Canada social transfer, a block transfer to provinces and territories which are each responsible for allocating federal support according to their respective priorities regarding post-secondary education and other social programs.

Overall, the Canada social transfer will provide \$15.5 billion in the fiscal year 2005-06, including more than \$8 billion in legislated cash levels and \$7 billion in tax points. This will continue to grow on an annual basis as the economy grows.

In addition to the Canada social transfer, the Government of Canada provides about \$5 billion annually in direct support for post-secondary education. That, among other things, helps families save for their children's education.

The bill provides additional funding to complement the initiatives already taken by the government. Specifically, it provides \$1.5 billion to increase accessibility to post-secondary education with a substantial portion to support students from low income families as well as training money to support labour market agreements. That is building on the \$1.6 billion for affordable housing. We add a further \$1.5 billion for initiatives in education and labour market training.

The third initiative is on the environment. As we know, the government is very much aware that a sustainable economy depends on a sound environment and healthy communities. To that end, we have made significant investments in the environment and in sustainable infrastructure in Canadian communities. Bill C-48 builds on those initiatives, proposing \$900 million for environmental investment.

The objective of the government's issues is to have the most impact where it matters most, in places where Canadians live, work and play. Canada depends upon the cities and communities to attract the best talent and compete for investment as vibrant centres of commerce, learning and culture.

That is why, building on the current financial support for infrastructure programs and the full rebate of the GST, the government has delivered on its commitment to share a portion of the revenues from the federal gas tax with municipalities to assist with their sustainable infrastructure needs, such as public transit, water, waste water treatment and community energy systems.

I might mention that for my city of Toronto, the GST rebate is in the order of about \$50 million annually and that continues year after year. Again, it is a significant sum of money.

Government Orders

This is a perfect example of different levels of government working together to achieve a common goal. Bill C-48 enhances the government's commitment, focusing primarily on public transit.

As members know, individual Canadians produce greenhouse gases through day to day activities, such as driving vehicles and heating or cooling homes, anything that involves energy use. Certainly, there are things that all citizens can do to play a key role in addressing climate change, particularly in their homes. That is why the bill also proposes to provide funding for low income energy retrofit programs.

Having talked to others in the corridors and around Parliament Hill, I know this is a particular aspect that has gained a lot of attention among certain members of the community.

Even before introducing the bill, the government had promoted actions by Canadians to reduce greenhouse gases through a range of information and incentive programs, such as the EnerGuide for houses retrofit Incentive program. This evaluation service provides homeowners with independent expert advice on the different systems of a home and information on energy efficient improvements that can increase comfort and reduce energy bills.

• (1135)

The government's goal is to quadruple the number of houses retrofitted under the EnerGuide for houses retrofit incentive program over the next five years. Indeed the proposal in the bill complements this plan.

I must say it is more than mildly curious that members opposite at one level oppose these initiatives and then say in the next breath that if they form the government, they will of course adopt these initiatives.

The next initiative is in the area of foreign aid. As a nation composed of people from every part of the globe, Canadians have a keen sense of the world beyond their borders. Indeed Canada as a G-7 member has a responsibility to contribute to making the world safer and protecting the vulnerable in times of strife.

If members want to see the new face of Canada, I would invite them to my riding. I do not think there is a racial, ethnic or religious group that is not represented in the riding. They are Canada's future.

Canada's recently released international policy statement sets out a vision for Canada and its role in the world. The new international policy framework delivers on the government's commitment to invest in our international role. We have made substantial progress in delivering on Canada's 2002 pledge at Monterrey to double international assistance by 2010-11. In addition, Canada will strengthen the partnership with Africa through debt relief and aid to foster private sector development and key investments to address the serious health issues afflicting that continent.

Bill C-48 forms an integral part of the government's foreign policy by proposing an additional \$500 million in international assistance. That new funding, combined with our proposed new approach for foreign aid, will better ensure that money goes to where it is most effective and do the most good.

Those who have been following this debate will notice that adds up to \$4.5 billion over the next two years. There is a minor discrepancy between the \$4.5 billion in the bill and the \$4.6 billion that has been committed to this initiative. The final initiative has to do with an agreement to invest a further \$100 million from within the fiscal framework to assist in the protection of workers' earnings in the event of employer bankruptcy.

That is in sum the \$4.6 billion committed over the next two years. I would like to reiterate that the proposals contained in the bill are merely a natural extension of everything the government stands for. We are proud of the contribution we have made in securing Canada's social foundations. We are proud of the contribution we have made to the securing of our fiscal foundations. We believe that Canadians are proud of what we have worked so hard to accomplish together.

I would urge all members to support the bill.

• (1140)

Mr. Randy White (Abbotsford, CPC): I think I have heard it all here today, Mr. Speaker. In the opening remarks of the Liberal member, I believe he said it was an unplanned social trust. I have been around this place for 13 years and this is a new one. This is an unplanned social trust. All of a sudden these things he just talked about become important because the Liberals made a deal with the NDP. That is what the unplanned social trust is. It is a \$4.5 billion deal.

If it was important before today, why was it not planned in the budget in the first place? Why is it that we have to suffer in the House of Commons the stupidity of a government that says it just made a \$4.5 billion deal and boy has it now got a planned social trust? What kind of stupidity is that anyway?

I spend a lot of time going across the country on issues such as drugs. The number of addicted young people is growing every single day. The issue has been in the House of Commons for three years. The Liberals have an unplanned social trust, but there is not one red cent in the budget or the social trust budget to try to get people off drugs.

He talked about education. Has anyone ever seen an ad on television or in the newspapers, or heard one on radio from the federal government trying to show young people that drugs are not good? But the Liberals have some unplanned issue about education.

By the way, there was an announcement yesterday about a whole bunch of money for airports across Canada. I asked the transport minister yesterday how much was in it for the Abbotsford airport. Not one red cent. It must be because it is one of the strongest held Conservative ridings in the country. That is sick.

Government Orders

Why is it that if these issues are so darned important to Canadians that they were not in the budget in the first place? The government has the unmitigated gall to stand in the House of Commons and say that all of a sudden these issues are really important because it made a deal with the NDP.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, I would like to think that the hon. member was listening carefully to my speech but he has just given a demonstration that he did not listen at all.

I did not talk about any unplanned social anything. I talked about unplanned surplus funds. There is a big difference. It is a pathetic example of the members opposite. I want to refresh the hon. member's memory as to how we got here.

As the hon. member will recollect, we were supported in this budget originally by his party. Gee, how about that? We were supported. When the budget implementation bill came in, then the Conservatives decided that the polls were going their way so they had better not support the budget any more. Then we had a food fight over the word toxic. As the polls continued to move in favour of the party of the members opposite, they thought they would not support the budget at all. Now it is a case of bringing down the government under any pretext and it does not really matter what the pretext might be.

It is a bit of a nonsense question on the part of the hon. member. If he had actually thought about his question and had he noted that it was the unplanned surplus, and if he had read the bill which I am quite sure he has not, he would know that anything above \$2 billion in the event that it is there, will be applied to these initiatives.

There is no difference between what the budget that was presented here and this particular initiative is, in the event that there is no surplus.

• (1145)

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member spoke very much of his Liberal priorities. One such priority is the establishment of a government day care bureaucracy which the Liberals have been pushing relentlessly.

While we in this party will keep existing agreements that have been signed with the provinces, I want him to know that he will find no support on this side of the House for a government day care bureaucracy. We will take child care dollars and give them directly to parents, allowing them to make their own child care decisions.

The government day care bureaucracy is going to cost, according to its own supporters, \$6 billion a year. It will bankrupt taxpayers. It is not affordable. It takes choices away from women and families.

We will oppose it. In fact if there is an election, the Prime Minister has called this the free trade issue of this election. We will oppose a government day care bureaucracy and replace it with a direct tax credit for parents.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether you are having as much difficulty following the bouncing ball of the members opposite. Initially they opposed this; we know that. When it turned out to be a measure that was well received by numerous Canadians, and various governments such as Manitoba, Ontario and Saskatchewan have actually entered into agreements with the

government, those members started to change their tune. The Conservatives trotted out one of their members from Edmonton who said that if they formed the government they would introduce this measure.

I think the hon. member should go back to his leader and find out exactly what the policy of the Conservative Party might be on this issue. I understand that initially the Conservatives were opposed to the policy; now I am not quite sure. I suspect that the hon. member may not have his marching orders quite right from his leader.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, listening to the Conservative members, they have wound themselves up so tightly in procedural red tape it is hard to figure out any more what it is exactly they are in favour of. We hear they are not in favour of child care. They are not in favour of money for housing. They are not in favour of money for education. Exactly what do they stand for?

For us in the NDP we are very happy that the bill is being debated because it is based on what Canadians want. People see the procedural wrangling that is taking place and the dysfunction that has been created in this place by the Conservatives as opposed to getting down to business and delivering on basic issues that people want, on housing, education, the environment, child care, safety and protection of our children. These are things that people want to see delivered. I am very proud to say that as a result of the agreement in this bill we have additional investments of \$4.6 billion that will go to those key items.

The parliamentary secretary is indicating that all these things were already there, but the fact is there was no relief for students. There was nothing in the original budget bill that was directed to students. There was nothing in the bill that was directed to housing as a new investment.

Is the parliamentary secretary committed to ensuring that this money is delivered to help students with their tuition? They are facing very real debt loads. This bill is about getting help to people, whether it is for housing or tuition, or through the gas tax for public transit. These are things that—

• (1150)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member's initial comments that the party opposite seems to be not the official opposition party but the party of against. The opposition members are against all of the initiatives that the hon. member listed among a whole variety of other things. I am not quite sure where the official opposition stands, other than they may be in bed with the separatists.

To directly respond to the hon. member's question, she will take note of budget 2004 which implemented quite a number of initiatives with respect to post-secondary education. She will recollect that in the course of my speech I indicated quite a number of initiatives that we had taken in previous budgets with respect to that issue.

Government Orders

It is the same with housing. A lot of the housing programs have been rolling out over the past number of years starting as I said with the SCPI initiative in 1999, budget 2001, budget 2003. As I said earlier, the current support is something in the order of \$1.9 billion. All of these initiatives build on those issues.

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Cariboo—Prince George.

This is a very dismal performance by the government. We are debating Bill C-48 but one has to wonder why. This seems to be the third Liberal budget since the February 2005 budget was introduced. Many people call it the NDP budget because, quite frankly, the two parties together do not have a majority in the House. I say that it is an illegitimate budget.

I do not think most Canadians will be amused with what the Liberals have been doing. They have been boycotting and filibustering their own legislation to not allow these bills to be debated and voted on in the House of Commons because they have become so desperate to hang on to power. They are hanging by their fingernails. This is a pathetic performance by a dying regime. We saw it in eastern Europe.

I have been in the House almost 12 years, like some of my colleagues, and this is the worst performance I have ever seen. I see desperate people making illegitimate agreements just to hang on to power. They are not respecting the parliamentary democracy we have in this country that at some time, and the Liberals do not seem to get this, maybe they will not be in power. They cannot conceive of that idea somehow so they will cut any deal and sign anything to hang on to power.

The budget was delivered on February 23 in which the Liberals announced \$42 billion in new spending. They went back and brought the numbers up for the 2004-05 fiscal year. They said that the surplus would be \$3 billion. Of course we snookered them by hiring our own fiscal forecasters at the finance committee who, just six weeks later, said that the Liberals were off and that the surplus was double that. It was \$6 billion. For this fiscal year 2005-06 the Liberals have estimated a \$4 billion surplus. The fiscal forecasters say that it will be \$8 billion, only six weeks later.

The unplanned surplus that the parliamentary secretary talked about, I do not think so. We have seen this crass practice in the last seven years of lowballing surpluses to build up huge funds that they can use in election campaigns. That is really what this is.

Next came Bill C-43, the budget implementation bill. What did the Liberals do? They snuck in a couple of amendments. One was the Kyoto amendment, which all of a sudden was tagged on to the budget. Just a few weeks earlier it was not there but they snuck it in to put greenhouse gases, carbon dioxide in particular, in the noxious gas category to allow them to tax it heavily. Of course we cannot support that. We want to see it hived off and we will try to do that in committee, if we ever get there.

Then of course today there is the NDP budget, which is Bill C-48. What has happened since budget day itself? There has been an almost \$8 billion turnaround. New spending plus the cuts in the taxes that were proposed under personal tax cuts and the corporate tax side has meant that essentially there is an \$8 billion difference.

What do we have here? We have a desperate government trying to buy itself another election. It is in a massive spending spree. It is trying to bury Gomery by taking away people's attention from Gomery with this budget.

Let us look at what today's newspapers are saying. The headline in the *Globe and Mail* on page A4 states, "Liberal spending blitz hits \$19.5-billion". Steven Chase says:

—Ottawa's minority Liberal government has grown so big it now amounts to nearly half the spending unveiled in the February budget.

It goes on to say, "the 2005 budget was only two months old when the government began piling on extra spending".

A headline in the *National Post* today reads, "Spending spree continues".

Another article reads:

Federal government spending announcements have hit \$22.3 [billion] since [the Prime Minister] went on television on April 21 to apologize for the Liberal sponsorship scandal.

Hon. John McKay: You don't like \$1 billion for farmers? You don't like \$1 billion off airport rent? Break it out, Charlie.

Mr. Charlie Penson: I know the parliamentary secretary does not like this because it is hitting a nerve and he is heckling but his time would be better spent, it seems to me, trying to prepare the pathetic campaign that he is going to have to run in the next few weeks.

• (1155)

I do not know how the Liberals will defend this. The government is so desperate that it has been announcing all over the country that it has spent \$1.24 billion, and that is new spending. It gets worse.

The *National Post* has decided to monitor this spending. In the last month and a half, since the government has taken this new tactic, it is up to spending announcement number 122. The last announcement was in St. John's, Newfoundland, quite a few were in Regina and several were in Toronto and Montreal. It seems like the spending is concentrated in areas where the Liberals will need support in the next election.

What bothers me is that Canadians have said things quite differently. Their priorities are quite different than these. I know the Liberals are trying to buy themselves an election but that is not what Canadians want.

I have been a member of the finance committee at different times over the years. During the prebudget consultations, Canadians told us that they wanted the government to cut its spending in areas to allow them some tax cuts so they could make decisions themselves. We heard from a number of organizations that talked about Canada's falling standard of living. In fact, it has been static for the last 15 years, which essentially means that we have gone backwards. Canada's productivity is only about 75% of that of the United States. The government does not seem to care.

Government Orders

Some corporate tax cuts were announced in the budget. They were going to be well back in the budget but now they are gone. It seems that the government has given in. It seems to be scared. It seems to be desperate and pathetic and its leadership is lacking. It is allowing any agenda it possibly had on February 23 to be hijacked in a desperate attempt to get votes.

I do not think that will work. People see through this. Canadians are not amused with what is happening. The Liberals are up every day in the House moving concurrence motions to delay their inevitable defeat in the House of Commons. We saw it again this morning. I came over to debate in the House this morning and the Liberals were at it again. They were discussing the Inuit sled dogs that were killed in 1955. The issue was so important they wanted to raise it in the House and yet two minutes later they adjourned the debate. These are the type of tactics they are using.

Let me talk about the Prime Minister for a moment. He had a big myth that he was the deficit slayer. He did a lot of that on the backs of the provinces by passing his problem on to the provinces. What we have seen is a guy so desperate to be in power that he unseated a sitting prime minister. He had a 15 year campaign to do that but now that he is in power he does not seem to know what to do with it.

About a year and a half ago a group of people in my riding said that they wanted me to switch over and sit with the Liberals so they could get cheques in the riding. They said that the member for LaSalle—Émard would sweep the country and win 250 seats. What happened to that?

The Prime Minister, who was finance minister at the time, had a myth going that he had done a great job of cleaning up the finances of the country. We now know that the provinces had to absorb a lot of that cost. We know that the current Prime Minister, who was going to campaign and win 250 seats, barely squeaked through with a thin minority.

What do we see now? We see the pathetic sight of a Prime Minister who cannot accept the will of Canadians, who cannot accept the fact that he does not have a majority in the House, making deals with everybody and his dog. He is spending money to try to buy the election, seat after seat. It is pathetic. It is illegitimate.

The government does not deserve to be in power any longer. The sooner it can be put out of its misery the better off we will all be.

The Liberals have this great thing going that if we do not pass the budget, everybody who has been promised money will not get it. What kind of blackmail—

An. hon. member: Extortion.

Mr. Charlie Penson: What kind of extortion is the government attempting? That is the worst example of governance that I have ever seen.

All this says to me is that we have a Liberal government and a Prime Minister, in particular, who are so desperate to hang on to power they will do anything. I think Canadians will see through this and they will throw those guys out at the earliest opportunity.

• (1200)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had hoped that there would be a little bit more discussion about the bill because I very much support it.

The bill deals with environmental issues for retrofits and low income housing, access to post-secondary education and foreign aid to Darfur and the Sudan, which I know all hon. members would like to see happen. It also deals with the protection of workers' earnings.

The member reverted to the budget implementation bill and said that his party was opposed to Kyoto and everything in it even though his leader ran out of the House before the budget speech was over to say that it was a great budget. Now those members turn around and play games.

The member said that the Prime Minister cannot accept that he is not in a majority. The fact is that the Prime Minister accepts the reality that it is not a majority. It is a minority government and minority governments have to work in a different way. It has to work collaboratively, which is exactly what has happened.

Since the member wants to play with the *Globe and Mail*, I think he had better come clean with Canadians. Which one of these spending items does he not agree with: the \$1 billion for farmers, the majority of which is for western Canada and for Ontario; the \$100 million for the pine beetle infestation in B.C.; the \$4.6 billion for the items included in this bill, being foreign aid, tuition for post-secondary education, housing and the environment? How about the \$5.75 billion for immigration services, tuition, training, administrative assistance and environment? How about the \$8 billion to reduce the rent for airports?

If the Conservative Party wants to be critical of the government for spending and say that it is buying votes, would the member please tell the House and Canadians, if he can, which of these items he disagree with?

Mr. Charlie Penson: Mr. Speaker, that is an interesting philosophy, particularly coming from a government that had the opportunity to introduce all these measures, to which he has spoken, on February 23 in the finance minister's budget. Just the fact that there is basically nothing left of the finance minister's budget, I cannot see how the finance minister can continue on. It seems to me that he has to resign.

If all these measures were so important, retrofits and the environment and Sudan, why were they not in the budget introduced just two and a half months ago?

I have already told the member but I will remind him again. Even though the Liberals thought they would not have that much money in a surplus, they were suggesting \$4 billion, the fiscal forecasters, Global Insight and so on that we hired, six weeks later already put the lie to that. They said that the government would have at least \$8 billion in a surplus for this year.

Government Orders

The Liberals have been running this scam. It is a game where they are lowballing the surpluses. They have become the laughing stock of the world. Even the IMF identified it. The Liberals are chastising the corporate sector for corporate malfeasance and telling the corporate sector to clean up its act and what are we getting out of this government, including the Prime Minister when he was finance minister? They are lowballing surpluses year after year to the point where it is a national embarrassment. They even had to hire Mr. Tim O'Neill to bring in a report on how that might be changed. Where is Mr. O'Neill's report? It is being buried until after the next election even though they promised it would be out before the budget.

The member asked questions about Kyoto. Kyoto was not included in the February 23 budget.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Kyoto's not an issue in the throne speech.

Mr. Charlie Penson: That was an amendment that was brought in about a month later in a crass move to try to hide it in the budget. If we want to debate whether CO₂ should be classified as a noxious gas, the varying CO₂ that we give off as we breathe and plants use, why do we not debate that in the environment committee in the proper forum? No. The Liberals tried to sneak it through in the budget. Naturally we do not agree with that. Quite frankly, the member is way off base. He is simply clinging to power.

• (1205)

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak on Bill C-48.

There is one thing that Canadians need to know, which the Liberals have not answered yet. They put forward their budget in February of this year. It was a budget that we in the Conservative Party could support. We could support it, but what we have now is a budget that is totally different from the one they put forward in February. This is a budget that was created by the NDP. The only reason these items are in this budget is that the Liberal government has chosen to climb into bed with the NDP.

Let me say that I do not fault the NDP members. They have the principles and the things they believe on how money should be spent. Good for them. We do disagree on how we get to certain goals, but that is fine. We have different philosophies.

What is really shameful about the Liberal government is that prior to making the deal with the NDP, it did not think those things were important. Suddenly, now that the Liberal government is falling quickly and the Liberals are drowning in their own cesspool of corruption, they find a lifesaver with the NDP. They say to the NDP, "Bring on those spending proposals and we will support them because we can make people think they are important to us now".

In fact, if these proposals were as important to the Liberals in February 2005, why on earth were they not in the budget back then instead of us seeing the Liberals wait until they are drowning in their own corruption to climb into bed with the NDP? What we have here is a pirate ship that is sinking fast. The Liberal members, the Prime Minister and the government are spending like drunken sailors to try to keep that pirate ship afloat.

Let us be clear about where this money is coming from. There is only one source of revenue for the government and that is the

Canadian taxpayer. This government over the last 12 years has plundered the hard-working Canadian taxpayer through tax increases, through government fee increases and through the pillaging of the \$40 billion-plus EI surplus. I do not see anywhere in this budget that the Liberals are going to put any of that money back.

As my colleague from Peace River pointed out earlier, this is the third budget revision since February. We now know that the government is doling out \$1.2 billion or \$1.3 billion a day in new spending announcements since the budget came out. This is money that was not accounted for in the budget. It was not accounted for in February. It was not accounted for a couple of weeks ago, but suddenly the government has all kinds of money.

What the Liberals are saying is that they found unplanned surpluses, but really what they are not saying is that they are going to use the money that they purposely did not make public, on the surpluses that are coming.

Which word is best to use here, Mr. Speaker, fibbing or fudging? This is like fudging the budget in saying that we are going to get so much money less than what the reality of the income is going to be, and then standing up and spending like drunken sailors because suddenly they found a big bag of extra money.

They ask why we do not support this budget. We cannot because it is not the same budget that the Liberals presented in February. Since then, as my colleague pointed out, they have added Kyoto to the budget in an effort to try to plant the seed so they could have a lever to somehow begin taxing fossil fuels when they decide they want to pull the cash lever a little more. We cannot support that; we all know about the Liberals' national energy program that devastated the west some years ago.

• (1210)

One of the members mentioned the \$100 million for pine beetles. On this \$100 million that the government promised to B.C. for pine beetles, let us be truthful: this represents only 10% of what the province asked the federal government for. It represents only one year of the commitment that the province asked the government for. The province asked for a commitment of 10 to 15 years. The government would not commit past one year. The government gave the province less than 10% of what was asked for.

While we in B.C. are certainly happy to get the \$100 million, the government and this parliamentary secretary know that the provinces cannot operate on short term planning, especially when they have a crisis in their lifeblood industries. The Liberals know that.

We cannot support the budget or this bill. We understood from the government that in 2005 a deal had been made with the provinces of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador on the offshore oil resources. That was debated in the House. Everyone had the understanding, including the provinces, that this was a stand-alone deal cut with the premier of Newfoundland and Labrador and the government of Nova Scotia. We were happy with that. Our colleagues who represent ridings in those parts of the country were happy with that.

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An hon. member: Nothing has changed for that—

Mr. Richard Harris: It was a stand-alone deal, but suddenly we find that this deal is included in a very large omnibus bill and we will have to vote for all the other things in order to get this bill through. This is not the budget of February 2005 that the government brought in, so how on earth can we support it?

This government is guilty of nothing less than reckless spending, deceptive practices and misrepresentation of surpluses it projected for the coming years. Worst of all, the government is in violation of the principles of running a good and honest government, because what the Liberals are doing with Bill C-48 is nothing less than making a deal that is costing billions of dollars of unscheduled spending. The government is on the road spending \$1.3 billion or so a day in unscheduled spending for no reason other than that of trying to save the Liberals' sorry butts from going down as they become known as the worst and most corrupt government in the history of Canadian politics. That will be their legacy.

Claim what they may about past governments, the Liberals are part of the worst and most corrupt government in the history of Canadian politics. They think nothing of spending billions and billions of dollars of taxpayers' money in order to somehow salvage their fortunes. Canadians will not be blackmailed. Canadians will not be extorted. Canadians will not have any part of the corruption of this government and they will bring it down in the next election when it happens. We will listen to Canadians on this one.

•(1215)

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if my colleague from Cariboo—Prince George is serious about listening to Canadians, he should be accepting the changes that the NDP saw fit to have the government make within that budget so that we could support it.

These are changes that Canadians wanted. There are dollars for child care, affordable housing and foreign aid, which his own party supported but now is not going to. There are additional dollars for tuition and education for Canadians throughout the country. Canadians are going to benefit from that.

I am at a loss as to why the Conservatives would not now be supporting this budget with those changes. However, I do recognize that it definitely wiped the smile off their leader's face, that smile he had after the first budget. The moment that budget came down there was the Cheshire cat with the biggest smile in the world. He was so happy about the budget that he could not even get out of this House without that smile. It was a budget that did nothing for ordinary Canadians but did everything for corporate tax cuts.

Now the smile is wiped off your face and you have to do something for Canadians, not just for your leader.

Mr. Richard Harris: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member talking directly to me, because now I can respond to that.

When the budget came down in February we suggested that we would be willing to support it. As a matter of fact, we saved the government's butt on two occasions when the NDP and the Bloc voted against it. They did vote against it. We actually saved the government, because we wanted to make the government work. We were going to allow the budget to pass and we were going to try to

carry on, watching the government very closely, believe me. We were prepared to carry on. The NDP and the Bloc voted against the provisions of the budget, so I do not know where the member is coming from.

Certainly on the items she just mentioned we do disagree on some. Child care is one example. We do not support state run child care. We support the government returning money to the parents of children and letting them decide which child care spaces they want to send their kids to. After all, it is the parents' money in the first place. Why should they give money to the government when the government will then tell them how to raise their kids? That simply does not make sense in this country.

While the NDP, and the Liberals as well, would love to have a state run, government child care system so they could build up a huge bureaucracy of people working in the industry, which would just fit fine with their philosophy, we on this side of the House in the Conservative Party believe that no one can raise kids better than the parents themselves. That is where the child care money should go.

We should give the parents of Canadian children the option of where they want to send their kids for child care, and not into some state run and state regulated child care service that is more like an institution than a loving home.

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will pick up on the point my hon. colleague talked about, caring for children and youth.

First, we now know that the Conservatives supported the first budget as it was. What has happened with the additional moneys that went into it? They are supporting our future, meaning our youth. It is for post-secondary education. It is providing money to support youth in terms of child care. More important, it is also supporting small and medium sized enterprises.

The question I really have for the member and his party is this one. Do they not support students? Do they not support making their lives easier? Do they not support post-secondary education?

I know why. Let me close with this. In the Conservatives' convention, those members voted down having a youth wing. That was publicly televised. Youth in my riding came to me and said, "My God, the traditional Progressive Conservative Party had a youth wing. The Liberals have a youth wing and so do the NDP, the PQ and everybody". Those members opposite, the Reformers, known afterwards as the Alliance, took over and kicked out the Progressive Conservatives and kicked out the youth of Canada.

Does he not support post-secondary education? That is what it is all about.

Government Orders

• (1220)

Mr. Richard Harris: Mr. Speaker, of course we support post-secondary education. Of course we support child care. We have a version that is a little different from what the Liberals and the NDP support in child care. We still believe that parents in this country have the first right of choice as to where their children go for day care while the government and the NDP believe that the government should somehow build and pay for institutions all over the country and we should send our kids to be looked after by some huge government bureaucracy.

As far as the youth wing in our party is concerned, I am proud that we consider our party a fully inclusive party, open to having all Canadians of all age groups in the mainstream of the party. We do not want to segregate youth simply because they are young. In our party, we treat them as adults and we ask them to be fully inclusive in the decision making. Why would we want to segregate them into a youth wing when we value their input in the mainstream body of our party?

An hon. member: As adults.

Mr. Richard Harris: As adults. They make adult decisions. Apparently the NDP and the Liberals simply do not trust their youth, so they relegate them to a youth wing and then make their decisions come through some sort of vetting process before they get to the main decision making body of the party. We do not buy that. We think youth are important and deserve full status in our party.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening since this morning to the comments of my colleagues on both sides of the House, including members of the government, the Conservative Party and the NDP, in their questions and comments. I think that one aspect of Bill C-48 is not clear enough. Over the next few minutes, I want to shed more light on the debate so that people can understand what the current situation is.

This is not about being left-wing or right-wing, or about supporting or opposing a social measure. The Bloc Québécois members are social democrats to the core. Naturally, we support positions that lean more to the left than to the right. Overall, we use common sense and a moderate approach. At present, we are not talking about that at all.

We are talking about the fact that this is a minority government. To start, when it tabled its first budget, it did not receive the support of the House. The opposition had identified priorities that correspond to what the public we represent wants or would have wanted to see in the budget. These priorities, this consensus, were totally ignored in the budget tabled a few months ago.

The Bloc Québécois has been consistent from the start. This budget was unacceptable when it was tabled and it is still unacceptable today, even with these new measures. We cannot support a budget or an amendment to the budget, as presented in Bill C-48, when, fundamentally, we have remained consistent. We have said that this budget did not satisfy the top priorities of Quebecers. Supporting this budget would mean betraying who we are.

As for Bill C-48 itself, we must consider the current context. We have a minority government that has not met the public's needs or

listened to the opposition parties. It has acted like a majority government and has completely ignored the consensus of Quebecers and even, in several instances, of Canadians.

Suddenly, it feels it is on the ropes. It is mired in corruption up to its neck. Everyday we learn something new from the Gomery commission, and it all adds up to the fact that a parallel group is not responsible for the corruption that occurred in connection with the sponsorship scandal, as the Minister of Transport said, but rather that this goes to the very core of the Liberal Party of Canada and even involves current ministerial aides.

The government is on the ropes. It can see power slipping away. So now it is throwing out commitments everywhere that it will not be able to keep, because it is going to be defeated this evening, with the motion of non-confidence the Conservatives have presented. So it is trying to play all sides at once.

There is one thing we need to keep in mind, however. Every time a government that is suspect, one formed by a party that is even more suspect, distributes such commitments—we are talking \$1.2 billion a day for the past 18 days—this just makes it even more suspect. This government should already be in police custody. It has done enough damage to the taxpayers' money and to democracy, by investing billions of dollars uselessly in order to influence the results of the last referendum in 1995, and the 1997, 2000 and 2004 elections. Enough is enough. It should not spend, or commit to spend, one cent more. It has already done enough harm with the taxpayers' money.

Now we see the Prime Minister making commitments just about everywhere. Yet only a few weeks ago he had no leeway. When the budget was presented, let us not forget, we were told that the government would have liked to have looked after more of its priorities, but that its main priority was a balanced budget.

That is our priority too, but we are well aware that, when the first budget was presented in February, there was still considerable leeway available. The government could have looked after more priorities, such as correcting the fiscal imbalance. It could have changed the employment insurance program, as it has been asked to do for years. After two elections and commitments from the Liberal Party to improve EI, the improvements have never happened.

• (1225)

We knew that there was money and that the government was twisted enough to not act on the public's priorities but rather to keep some manoeuvring room secretly for itself, as it has done since 1997-98. We have a minority government continually mired in corruption, according to the ever more astounding revelations at the Gomery commission. You can check in the blues and in our public speeches. We knew there was manoeuvring room and the Prime Minister would use it when the going got tough, as it has in recent days.

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There is a reason behind the \$1.2 billion in commitments daily. It is not to better serve the public. A few weeks ago, he could have included it in the budget per se. He could have acted on people's priorities, served this country's most disadvantaged. He did not. Why not? Because he thought he could get out of it and because the Conservatives did not reject the budget. A few weeks later, the NDP joined in to ally officially with a government that is suspect, I repeat. When you are suspect, when you are being held for questioning, you have to stop spending. You no longer have the moral authority to make commitments of several billions of dollars, as the government has done for the past 18 days.

"Do not touch taxpayers' money", is the message heard throughout our ridings. "Stop making commitments. You are being held for questioning, you are under suspicion." Arguments are added daily to the public's warnings.

They talk of the sponsorships. But there is more than that. Since 1993, since this government has been in office, there have been all sorts of stories, such that we should not let it have another cent, because it is spending all over the map.

On the other side of the House, the Liberals have a tendency to forget certain events. We all remember on this side—although memories on the other side are rather faulty—the scandal over Human Resources Development Canada, for which the minister responsible at the time is now the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the member for Papineau. A billion dollars disappeared under the stewardship of this minister and could never be found. Several years later—this scandal came to light some five years ago—the money still has never been found. Where is that billion dollars?

There is also the firearms scandal. We in the Bloc Québécois are in favour of firearms control, but not at any price. This program to manage and control firearms was supposed to cost \$20 million. Now it is more than \$1.5 billion. Where has that \$1.5 billion gone?

There are also many problems with taxes and tax treaties. Why are these problems not fixed? Once again, the government is suspect. There is a treaty with the Barbados and regulations governing corporate taxes here that, when combined, make it possible for corporations to save money. Thus the Prime Minister's family business, Canada Steamship Lines, was able to save more than \$120 million in federal taxes over the last five years.

With the Prime Minister setting this example and being a suspect in the sponsorship scandal—because more and more light is being shed thanks to the revelations of the Gomery Commission—could there be any doubt that the government is not only very lax but that this slackness is also very profitable for the Prime Minister and his cronies, the large corporations involved in international shipping.

I had an opportunity to work with Mr. Jacques Léonard, president of the Conseil du Trésor in Quebec City. Together with my honourable friend from Joliette, we were on a committee to review government management. There, too, not one more cent should be entrusted to this government in view of its poor management of the public purse. When the Prime Minister used to be Minister of Finance, he liked to boast that he was one of the best managers in the world. Well, we have made some fabulous discoveries.

● (1230)

I will name a few. Listen up if you want to know what this government does with taxpayer dollars. While cumulative inflation was set at 9.6% from 1998 to 2003, bureaucratic spending increased by 39% during that same period. In addition, the number of public servants increased by 46,000, and payroll by 41%. In the Department of Justice alone, payroll increased by 141%, while inflation was still 9.6% during that period. The cost of political polls, which really do the public and the poorest families a lot of good, increased by 334%.

This government is quite fond of lavish spending. The cost of office furniture increased by 215%. Also, some \$1.5 billion went to the gun registry, which we cannot mention enough. Furthermore, the Governor General enjoyed an 82% increase in her budget, while the average salary increase for low-income and middle-income workers, under collective agreements, was roughly 2% a year, for a modest increase of 8% during that period. Yet, the Governor General gets an 82% increase. A lot of good that does the public, the unemployed, young people who are victims of an underfunded education system.

It is scandalous. Not just the sponsorships, but all the waste, the mismanagement, the hidden funds, like the billion dollars at HRDC, all of it is scandalous. This lavish spending shows that the government has not had the moral authority to govern for a long time now.

We have been all the more convinced of this since hearing all the revelations at the Gomery inquiry targeting the Liberal Party and the staff of certain ministers, and even some ministers themselves who said they never saw nor heard anything about this scandal.

Today, we are being asked to respect the government and its new annual commitments of \$1.2 billion. We will never do this. If the new commitments set out in Bill C-48 were significant, perhaps we would. However, such a corrupt government should no longer be managing our money or making commitments, but rather respecting the verdict that will be rendered this evening, when we defeat it. It is time for this government to step aside and stop spending our money.

I want to examine each of these commitments in turn. Some \$1.6 billion is being invested over two years in affordable housing. There was no money for social housing a few months ago, no more than has been since 1993. Suddenly, there is \$1.6 billion over two years for this sector, which needs two and a half times that amount each year in order to meet the needs of the public, which have increased since 1993. At that time, when the Liberals came to power, 1.3 million households in Canada needed access to social housing. Up to 50% of their income was going toward housing. At 25% of income, people are poor enough to qualify for social housing.

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Now, 1.7 million households need access to social housing. At least 1% of the annual federal budget should be allocated to this sector to make up for lost time, following devastating measures, in the fight against poverty, by the former finance minister and current Prime Minister. With regard to housing, poverty is also caused by measures such as the drastic cuts to EI and federal transfers to the provinces for social programs. At one time, federal contributions were at 25% and even 50%, 25 years ago. Currently, it contributes about 11.5%

The Liberals are responsible for poverty. They did not invest in social housing. Suddenly, for fear of being defeated or being shown the door, they have committed \$1.2 billion in initiatives in the last 18 days.

•(1235)

They promised \$1.5 billion for access to post-secondary education. For years now, since 1995, the Liberals have been pillaging educational systems everywhere in Canada, not just in Quebec.

In Quebec an investment of \$1 billion was needed every year for the next ten years in order to remedy the chronic underfunding this government has caused. We have been presented with \$1.5 billion for the next two years for post-secondary education. Do you know what that represents for Quebec? Approximately \$188 million out of the expenditures of \$12.2 billion. The potential is there, but the NDP was too quick to sell its birthrate for a mess of pottage to a corrupt government. We are talking \$188 million for post-secondary education out of the \$12.2 billion in education spending.

That is just mocking the public. It that is all it took to get the NDP to sell its soul to the corrupt Liberal Party, it is pretty insignificant.

As I have said, it is the same thing with social housing. They say there will be \$1.6 billion over two years, but it would take \$2 billion a year just to make up for lost time. And even that figure is based on previous needs, but the latest figures indicate that now there are 1.7 million households in need of social housing.

If the government had wanted to govern properly and had not got so mired in all the Gomery revelations—with all the distasteful and undemocratic details we have been treated to in the past few months—it would have had sufficient leeway to meet all the priorities mentioned to us at the time of a meeting between myself, the Minister of Finance and the Conservatives. It could have started to resolve the fiscal imbalance by greatly increasing education transfer payments. Now federal transfers account for 11.5% of education costs, everywhere in Canada.

It could also have corrected the equalization formula, as we asked, instead of signing piecemeal agreements. Moreover, in the budget implementation bill they want us to swallow the agreement with Newfoundland and Labrador, and with Nova Scotia. They want us to swallow an agreement that has just clouded the issue as far as fiscal imbalance is concerned, making it worse than before.

With this agreement, they have put huge pressure on the other provinces. They have created an imbalance, which may be called a horizontal imbalance, that is, they have increased the fiscal capacity of Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia so much that it is now higher than that of Ontario. Ontario can well get angry and cry

foul, like Quebec. The special agreements confuse matters rather than treat them comprehensively.

If the Prime Minister were really concerned about correcting the fiscal imbalance, he would not operate on a piecemeal basis as he did with Ontario, and as he does with the \$1.2 billion commitments he has made a day over the past 18 days. He would not be concerned about sprinkling commitments here and there in order to save his skin. He would have worked responsibly during the past 10 months and presented a budget taking steps to resolve the fiscal imbalance. He would have had the support of the Bloc Québécois and probably all of the parties.

The provinces have to deal with unavoidable expenses in health care, education and support to the most disadvantaged families. They do not have enough resources. These resources are in Ottawa. The possibilities of deficit are very real.

Last year, for example, Ontario had a \$10 billion deficit. This year, its deficit is \$6 billion, and on it goes. Quebec faces huge pressure over taxation and a balanced budget. This could be remedied, but, for 18 days, the Prime Minister has not been concerned with correcting this fiscal imbalance any more than with remedying the employment insurance plan.

I can hardly wait to see the NDP members in the next election, which will probably be called this evening. They will go to their riding and say that they joined with a government that did not deign to do anything of any significance to resolve the EI problem. They were the defenders and attacked the government in order to have EI reformed and 60% of the population not excluded from it.

•(1240)

Now, they join with the Liberals, who have forced hundreds of families into the street each year since the EI reform. They have kept them on social assistance and in a state of poverty.

In closing, I congratulate the NDP on its social and moral conscience.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot covered a range of items beyond the current bill. I understand his points. He represents the Bloc Québécois, the party that wants to separate Quebec from Canada. He is someone who I understand. Politically, he sees an opportunity to marry up with the Conservatives to cause some difficulties. This will be a big issue for Canadians.

However, I do not want to get into the political arguments. I want to talk about some of the issues. One thing the member talked about quite specifically, as it relates to Quebec, was post-secondary education.

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Throughout his speech, he mentioned how critical he and his party were of the \$4.6 billion of additional spending on environmental matters, like retrofits, low income housing, access to post-secondary education, foreign aid and the protection of workers' earnings. He highlighted post-secondary education and was very critical of the spending. He said that this was to buy votes. Then in the very next breath, he turned around and complained that it was not enough for Quebec.

The member is either for it or against it. He cannot have it both ways. If we are to have reasoned debate on some of these issues, one cannot argue all sides of the question and not let people know where one stands. It is important that the member clarify whether he does or does not support the additional spending on post-secondary education. He should make that clear. He cannot be on both sides.

The member also mentioned a matter on the question of fiscal imbalance. I know the member has been very active on this. He is the chair of that finance subcommittee. We had an opportunity to work together on it.

One aspect is very important to the question of fiscal imbalance, and that is the issue of tax points. The member knows of what I speak. He also knows that it is very difficult to somehow explain that the value of transfers to the provinces is a combination of cash transfers as well as tax points which have an economic value and a true cash value.

One thing we found out, and I have not heard how the member reacted, was when Ontario calculated the transfers, with regard to the health and social transfer, it calculated it only on the basis of cash only, not on the tax points.

As a result of his work, in terms of the economic equity issue, in his opinion does the issue of tax points have to be included in determining the effective transfers to the provinces?

• (1245)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Loubier: Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for my Liberal colleague. I was attacking the government, and not specific individuals. I repeat that I have a great deal of respect for him.

He did not want to get into the political arguments, but he has done just that by saying that I was clearly a separatist and that, to me, this is an excellent opportunity to encourage Quebec's separation from Canada. I will simply and very calmly give him the following answer, since this matter is extremely important to me.

Under other circumstances, we would not have acted and we would have remained seated and silent. Unfortunately, the machinations of this government—which used public funds, 22% of which come from Quebec—are disgraceful and anti-democratic. The members of the Liberal government distorted the democratic process in 1995 by organizing the Montreal love-in. They used public funds, which flowed through the sponsorship program, or other tricks to simultaneously steal the 1995 referendum and a part of our soul from us.

We had clear democratic rules in Quebec. The yes side had \$5 million, just like the no side, and we fought it out democratically in a

battle of ideas. These people came and upset everything in the name of so-called Canadian unity. Whether federalists or sovereignists, Quebecers had accepted these democratic rules. Then these people spoiled everything with their dirty money. They did the same thing in the elections of 1997 and 2000. Insofar as the 2004 election was concerned, we do not know yet, but there was still probably dirty money in the Liberal party's coffers.

So now we are accused of taking advantage of this opportunity to ride the sponsorship scandal. In fact, it is previously undecided Quebecers who are deciding whether to get the hell out of this corrupt regime. It made me sick at heart to think that the Liberals had used my money as a taxpayer and that of my sovereignist neighbour—50% of Quebecers are sovereignists. They used the taxes we pay to beat us in the last referendum. They subverted democracy and flouted Quebec's political party funding legislation and the Referendum Act. That really makes me sick.

Quebec's motto is *Je me souviens*. I can guarantee you that we will remember not only after the government is defeated this evening but also when the time comes some day to count up the people who are still undecided. Sovereignty will not be achieved just because of a tax question or a corruption issue. People in Quebec who are still undecided must understand that we send \$40 billion in taxes to this bloody federal government. And then we take it in the ear when this money that belongs to us is allocated.

My hon. friend spoke about having it both ways. It must be understood that it is not his money or Liberal party money but the money of Quebec taxpayers. We send the federal government \$40 billion in taxes and have to get down on bended knee to receive some of it back in order to reach a consensus on various matters and achieve Quebec's priorities.

That will be added to the arguments. If the Liberals thought that they were saving Canadian unity by subverting democracy and using dirty money, they were badly mistaken. The past is coming back to haunt them now.

[*English*]

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member spoke about Liberal waste and Liberal corruption. We know this is a corrupt, wasteful government. I want to identify what I consider to be the number one article of waste in the Liberal government's agenda, and I would like to find out what the hon. member thinks of my thesis on this.

I believe the number one article of waste in the Liberal government's agenda is its attempt to create a government day care bureaucracy.

The supporters of a government day care bureaucracy, even in the CAW and in other organizations that have advocated a national government-run day care bureaucracy, believe it will cost between \$6 billion and \$10 billion per year to bring in the day care bureaucracy. At the same time as costing about 10 times what the Liberals claim it will cost, they will be taking choices away from women and families.

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It is a paternalistic system and the women in my constituency have told me that they will not have the minister stand and tell them how to raise their kids. The women in my riding believe in their right to choose how to raise their own children instead of having the government take money out of their pockets and then spend it on raising other people's kids.

I want it on the record in the House, for all my constituents in my suburban Ontario riding to know, that I will fight until my dying day to stop that day care bureaucracy. It takes choices from women and families and it will waste billions. I invite the hon. member's comments.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Loubier: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I can state right at the start that I do not share his opinions on public child care facilities.

We put such facilities in place five years ago in Quebec.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Yvan Loubier: Pay close attention, this is important. We put public child care facilities in place. This kind of debate took place in Quebec at the start, but I can assure you that now people are very pleased to have child care for what was initially five dollars a day and now is seven dollars. People are very pleased, because it works. We were also very pleased in Quebec to be able to act as an inspiration for the rest of Canada. But during those five years of operating with our original idea, we bore all the costs ourselves. We also assumed the tax deductions and federal tax credits to which the parents would normally have been entitled. Because of the low cost, the five dollars and then seven dollars a day, we could not draw as much benefit from tax credits and federal tax exemptions, and we have never been compensated for that.

The child care system works. My party and I support it and are very pleased with it. We have focussed on the bureaucratic expenses which have risen considerably. Had their growth been limited only to inflation in these sectors—and not been 10, even 30 times greater in certain cases—we could have saved \$5 billion annually. We could have applied these savings to increasing the number of public child care spaces.

What we are particularly opposed to is the *laissez faire* attitude, particularly where bureaucratic expenses are concerned. I have listed some of these already. Opinion polls, up 334% in five years, which makes no sense. Office furnishings, 215%, another aberration. These are luxuries to which we object strongly.

[*English*]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak on this very important debate and I will be splitting my time with the member for Winnipeg North.

The voters in the last election sent a very clear message. They were not happy with continued majority Liberal governments. They wanted better; they wanted a new direction. It was the decision of a great number of Canadians that New Democrats should be sent to the House of Commons in order to attempt to achieve some of the goals

that Canadians had in mind for people, their families and the environment.

When people vote for the New Democratic Party, they expect us to come here to work and not to play political games, and engage in the kind of political back and forth name calling and brinkmanship that has been going on in this House of Commons for quite some time. We of course looked for an opportunity to make a difference on behalf of the Canadians who voted for us, and Canadians more broadly, around the issues that they felt were most important.

We took a look at this budget when it was first presented and the first thing we noticed was that there was a very large tax cut being given to the large corporate sector. This was never promised in the election. Canadians did not vote for such an initiative. Yet, there it was in the budget.

Meanwhile, Canadians had hoped that the budget would address affordable housing, significant action to achieve our Kyoto targets and reduce pollution so there would be clean air for people to breathe, and putting Canada on the international stage and to a position of honouring its commitments on foreign aid. Many other issues such as post-secondary education funding so that tuition fees which are rising through the roof and student debt which has reached completely unacceptable levels were not addressed.

We looked at the budget and saw that many of those commitments, many of those aspirations that Canadians had but had not been realized in the budget, represented a problem in that budget document. We had promises broken to Canadians, on the one hand, and on the other hand, we had very expensive initiatives that were never promised, namely, corporate tax cuts to the friends of the government. So, faced with that budget, we were unable to support it.

We did notice that the Conservative Party felt that it was a terrific budget and were happy to sit on its hands and not vote against it. As a result, it was going to move forward on that basis.

Then, as a result of the unfolding political games here in Parliament that have left so many people quite disgusted at what goes on in this place, the Conservatives decided that they would no longer support the budget that they initially thought was terrific.

We sat down and asked, as a caucus, “How can we offer to improve this budget to the point where it might actually deliver on some of the needs that Canadians are facing?” We consulted very broadly in this process. We talked to the NGOs, we talked to Canadians, and we talked to representatives of provincial governments, municipal governments, and the labour movement.

We decided to offer some initiatives, that if they were put into the budget at the same time as removing the overly generous, very large corporate tax cuts to big business, we could create a new balanced budget. It would be balanced in terms of its fiscal content and it would also be balanced in terms of its approach to dealing with the issues. Canadians could at least have on the table a budget that really represented their values, their perspectives, and the issues that faced them in their daily lives.

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Furthermore, we suggested to the Liberal Party at the time, and to the Prime Minister, that if the government was willing to move in an expeditious fashion to actually adopt these changes to the budget, so that there could be some results from the deliberations over the last 10 months that have largely been unproductive in this House, this would represent a real contribution to Canadian political life and, more important, to the lives of Canadians themselves and to their families.

Canadians could then look forward to their children perhaps actually achieving post-secondary education and training for the jobs of the 21st century instead of having to decide, as many of them are right now, that they cannot afford to carry on with post-secondary education or pursue training that they need because they simply cannot afford it and it would be too much of a burden on their families.

● (1255)

It is hard to imagine a more tragic circumstance than young people who have worked hard through high school, achieved the grades that are needed to be admitted to university or college, and then to have to realize that they simply cannot afford to make use of the opportunity that should be there for every young Canadian.

That was very important as part of our proposals. Our first proposal was that there should be a fund created that would allow for greater affordability of post-secondary education, with a specific focus on tuition fee reduction as a very important goal.

Second, we turned to the issue of affordable housing. I must admit that I was completely shocked when I read the budget document and saw that not one penny through the five years of that budget plan was being added to deal with the crisis of homelessness and affordable housing in this country.

Our party, Canadians, municipal organizations, NGOs and homeless people themselves have been calling for action to build affordable housing for years. I remember when two blocks from my home Eugene Upper perished and froze to death because we did not have enough affordable housing in our communities for people such as Eugene Upper to put a roof over their heads. It was absolutely shocking.

There have been many announcements made of large sums of money that were ostensibly to be spent. Most of that money has never flowed to the very people who are in need of housing. It has sat in accounts. It has been announced time and time again in press conferences and press releases where politicians in a self-satisfied way beat their chests about their level of concern. Yet, year after year goes by as homelessness increases and people die in the streets of a rich country such as Canada because we have no national affordable housing program to speak of.

It was the finance minister in the mid-1990s who annihilated the affordable housing construction program that in fact had won international recognition as the best housing program in the world. That was a housing program that was created at the time when the member for Ottawa Centre was the housing critic of the New Democratic Party and in a minority Parliament.

As a result of working for the interests of Canadians in that context we saw a minority Parliament working. I am very proud to

be part of a caucus that is once again attempting to do exactly the same thing around affordable housing.

Third, we turned to the issue of the environment. The fact is that our communities need some of that huge federal surplus which comes to the federal government in part from a gas tax of 10¢ a litre, also GST on top of all of that from gasoline sale, and that never makes its way back into the communities to be invested on cleaning the environment.

In my experience in the municipal world and as past president of the Canadian Federation of Municipalities, we pushed hard against an intransigence on the part of this government for many years. Finally, we got the beginnings of some movement in this budget, 1.5¢ out of the 10¢.

We felt that was insufficient and that in a balanced budget context it was possible to do more. We proposed that an additional 1¢ would be delivered directly to those communities, so they could move on things like public transit which is so vital to reducing the number of smog days. In my home city of Toronto we are not on our first smog day of the season. There were smog days in February and then again in the month of May. When smog happens, it sends people to hospitals.

Fourth, we put a focus on international aid. Canada made a commitment to respond to the international needs of so many who are living at a dollar a day, billions of people globally. We have such great affluence that 0.7% of GDP should be directed to these purposes.

Our proposal to add a half a billion dollars in the next two years for that objective will move Canada on a trajectory toward achieving that goal. There is more to do. As we listen to Stephen Lewis and so many other eloquent speakers talk about the needs globally and what a Canadian dollar could do to save lives, we felt it was important to put that initiative as part of the revised better budget that would focus on people's needs.

● (1300)

Last is the intervention to create \$100 million fund that will help workers when they are faced with bankruptcies in their workplace. It is an absolute injustice that workers who have put all their work over so many years, their lives in many cases, into the profitability of a business would be left behind.

It is with a great deal of pride but also considerable humility that our party try to engage in this process in a positive way. We now have a better balanced budget for families and for the environment. Our goal is to have it passed.

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the leader of the socialist party, waxing eloquent of his new deficit spending deal with the Liberal Party. I would like to ask him a specific question about agriculture. That member, before the flip-flop occurred, when the original budget was presented, asked how Conservative members of Parliament could support that budget. He said:

How can the member from Saskatchewan stand and support a budget that gives nothing for farmers when they are living on the edge?...How will that help any of the farmers living on the edge. They are producing food for us and the world virtually for free? In fact, they lose money.

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He chastized us for not defeating the budget by voting against it. Then he cuts a deal with the Liberals, the corrupt ad scamming government, and still does nothing for farmers. He sold out his support without a dime in that deal for Saskatchewan's farmers, a group of people who are on the edge, who need some assistance. Why has he left them out in the cold after chastizing us for not defeating the budget? Now he comes in and props it up without doing anything that he said he would do.

He has done nothing to secure an equalization deal for Saskatchewan, a deal that would see billions of dollars remain in Saskatchewan instead of being clawed back from natural resource revenues, money that could be reinvested for farm safety net programs. We know the NDP in Saskatchewan does not fund programs such as CAIS like other provinces do. Its excuse is that it does not have the revenues. The Conservative Party urges the government to have an equalization deal, to get those dollars back to Saskatchewan so they can be put into those agricultural safety nets. There is not a word on this in the new Liberal-NDP coalition budget.

What does the member have to say to farmers in Saskatchewan who he has left in the cold, his betrayal of them by not standing up for them and not trying to negotiate a single new cent for them?

• (1305)

Hon. Jack Layton: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear the hon. member speak about this. That budget was being supported by the Conservatives only weeks ago. Frankly, it is difficult to warrant investing a lot of time in a response to those allegations, as unfounded as they are.

First, our party decided to go to work to address some issues, unlike the Conservative Party opposite. We brought proposals to improve investment across the country in key areas. Having spent many years working with the municipal organizations in Saskatchewan, the idea of having gas tax, and more gas tax as a result of our NDP proposals in the budget, is something they have sought for years. We are not just talking about SUMA. We are talking also about SARM. Perhaps the hon. member should spend a little more time getting to know these organizations.

We are talking about municipalities that are looking for some of the gas tax in order to invest in their infrastructure and that is of great assistance to farmers. I have spoken with farming families in Saskatchewan as well as their organizations, and the failed investment in infrastructure is one of the key issues. In addition, if this budget fails as a result of the actions of the member's party, then the funding, albeit inadequate I will grant that, available to assist farmers would disappear. At least there is something in the budget and by having the budget pass, there will be some benefits flowing in response, for example, for the BSE situation.

It is very interesting to hear members of the Conservative Party attempt to champion the farmers when they have never supported agricultural safety nets. In fact, we have heard many allegations on their part that these are too generous.

We are calling for concrete action that will benefit people across the country. We need investments in post-secondary education, in affordable housing, in getting the gas tax back to communities and in international assistance so Canada can play its full role.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to participate in the debate on what I have called over the last number of days, the NDP budget bill. I am not trying to boast, but simply to put on record the good work of our leader, the member for Toronto—Danforth. I also want to acknowledge the work of our House leader, the member for Vancouver East.

These two individuals devoted an incredible amount of time over the last couple of weeks trying to improve a budget that was failing Canadians. They put hours of effort into convincing the Liberal government that its budget needed to shift priorities and ensure that fundamental issues of significance to the life and well-being of Canadians were added in the budget. It is as simple as that. We did not support the original budget. Why? Because on a number of these key issues, which I think Conservatives are concerned about as well, there was nothing in the last federal budget. There was nothing for housing or education, two of the most pressing issues facing our country today.

We did not support the last Liberal budget on February 23 because it failed Canadians and took away valuable money. I would agree with members opposite that we have to be careful and responsible with our dollars. We have to ensure a fiscal balance and that we do not run another deficit. We absolutely agree with that and we did it responsibly.

We went to the government with concerns about the \$4.6 billion that it put against corporate tax cuts. That followed a corporate tax cut of millions of dollars over the last five years, bringing the corporate tax rate from 28% down to 21%. The last budget proposed another drop from 21% to 19%. We said that the government should take that money and direct it toward where it would make a difference in terms of creating jobs and improving the health and well-being of Canadians, as opposed to putting it into another deep, dark hole where we would not see more investment in Canada or increased productivity and where we would not see the riches, the wealth and the cash in which it is swimming distributed to Canadians.

The member for Nepean is getting a little agitated at our presence in the House today, and I hope he is agitated. I hope he is getting a lesson from some of the women in his caucus about his patronizing, chauvinist remarks when it comes to day care and women. I for one am offended by his remarks. I will stand in the House and do whatever I can to talk about how the Conservatives are insulting working women who are trying to juggle work and family responsibilities.

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Excuse me if my voice is a little hoarse. I have been spending a lot of time talking about this over the last number of days. In fact, when I went home to my riding in Winnipeg North, I was inundated with calls from people who wanted to know about this budget. They wanted to know when it would come into effect. They asked that we ensure it happen. They pleaded with us to make it a reality for Canadians. It is the moment in the life of this Parliament when we have a decision to make that will truly make a difference for Canadians.

• (1310)

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The hon. member from the NDP caucus across the way made mention that the Conservatives were not supportive of day care. She made some quite insulting comments on the record.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): May I remind the hon. member that we are now in debate. The hon. member for Winnipeg North has the floor. If she wishes, she may ask questions or make comments when she is done, but I am afraid this is not a point of order.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, I would be glad to take on that point of order at the first opportunity I have. I hope in the meantime the member for Kildonan—St. Paul will read the comments made by her colleague from Nepean.

I will get back to the issues at hand, the importance of getting this budget passed. The budget bill came about as a result of hard work by the NDP in cooperation with the Liberals. I tell the Bloc that this does not mean we condone or sweep under the carpet all the news we are learning about corruption and the sponsorship scandal. We know there will be an election on corruption. That is self-evident. We have a chance in the House at this moment to make a difference for Canadians. We have a chance to get a budget through that means something to the lives of working people and their families.

If my colleagues in the Conservative Party and the Bloc Party had been truly listening at our finance committee hearings and understood what was going on in those prebudget consultations, they would have agreed with us. They heard what we heard. We heard that if there were anything the government could do at this moment to grow the economy, to help reduce the debt, to ensure that we could thrive and be competitive in this world economy, it would be to put money into education, lower tuition and stop the patchwork band-aid of programs, like the millennium scholarship fund and the learning fund. We heard that the government should start to put something meaningful in place for students and help families send their children to post-secondary education.

We heard that not just from social justice organizations or student movements. We heard it from the business community, from corporations and from chambers of commerce. We heard it from every group that appeared before committee. They said nothing made more sense than to invest in education.

Through this time of cooperation between the NDP and the Liberals, we have managed to allocate \$1.5 billion for education to help lower tuition costs, to help families send their sons and daughters to university. That is Parliament at work. That is serving Canada. That is why we are all here. That is also why New Democrats are determined to ignore the games being played by the

Conservatives and others in the House and to put our noses to the grindstone and get this budget through. It is vital not just to families right now, but it is vital to the future of our country.

It is also important to understand that people are sick and tired of these games. They are sick and tired of all the different moves to try to help the Conservatives bring down the government. All those members see right now is power and the need to grab on to it. They are turning their backs on all those Canadians they came here to represent. They are turning their backs on families who want to send their children to university. They are turning their backs on families who cannot access affordable housing. They are turning their backs on people who need access to public transit. They are turning their backs on people who would like help in ensuring that their homes are made energy fit. They are turning their backs on billions of people around the globe who live in abject poverty, the millions who earn maybe \$2 a week. They are turning their backs on Canada's responsibility to share a bit of our wealth to ensure that we do our part in diminishing world-wide poverty.

We come here with good faith, goodwill, in an attempt to make Parliament work. We believe not only do we require a budget that addresses the needs of Canadians, but we have to restore people's faith in this place. They are turning away from us. If an election is called in a short while, all those folks who have been watching this place or who have been hearing about it will have a hard time going to the polls. They do not see their hopes and dreams being represented in this place. They do not see their way of interacting with people, which is on a basis of cooperation and decency reflected in this place. Canadians are sick to death of what is happening here. We have an obligation to stop the games, get down to business and pass this budget.

I urge all members in the House to put aside their political agendas right now, leave them for a while, get this place working again. I urge all members to help us get this budget bill through. It is exactly what the Conservatives want. It would allocate resources from the surplus on an upfront, transparent basis.

• (1315)

I want to remind the Conservatives that this is exactly what they have been calling for in the finance subcommittee dealing with the fiscal imbalance and the need to have more accurate forecasting. They have said, just like we have ensured in this bill, that moneys from the surplus are to be specifically assigned to projects so that Canadians know and have a say and Parliament knows and has a say.

We have made a difference. It is the path to follow for the future. I urge all members in the House to support this bill and get on with working for Canadians.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speech today and was quite astounded at some of the comments made.

I think it is quite clear that members on this side of the House want to give child care dollars to parents and let parents make their own decisions about what they want to do in terms of care for their children.

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It is going to cost \$6 billion in tax dollars to implement the program that is suggested here. As a member of Parliament and a parent who has raised six children, I will say that I like to make my own decisions about my children. People in my riding are saying that they want to make their own decisions for their children.

Why does the member want to take the decision making away from parents? Why does the member not want child care dollars to go to parents to let them, not the state, make their own decisions?

● (1320)

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, first I have to tell the member for Kildonan—St. Paul that under the designs for a national child care program all parents and families have freedom of choice. Parents have freedom of choice to ensure that they can provide for their kids in a quality setting while they make a living to support their families.

It is absolutely ludicrous for those Conservatives to suggest that if we just gave the money to families, these day care centres, with quality, trained professionals, with good programming and with nutritious food, would miraculously spring into place and parents would be able to access day care at a reasonable cost.

An hon. member: That is fantasyland.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Absolutely, that is fantasyland.

The member should talk to the Manitoba Child Care Association, which has been leading this fight for more than 10 years, and probably for 20 years, trying to get a non-profit, publicly administered, quality child care system from one end of this country to the other.

Finally, let me calm down a bit to say that this is an important issue, just as education, housing and support for environmental projects are important to Canadians. All of this will be lost unless members over there can get their heads around supporting Bill C-48, which is the mechanism for accessing some surplus dollars to meet the priority needs of Canadians, and Bill C-43, which provides money for child care on a very sensible, reasonable basis that is clearly in tune with Canadian families.

All of that will be lost if those members decide to keep obstructing the House in the interests of their political ambition and their search for power as they turn their backs on the Canadians they claim to represent.

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the comments by the member for Winnipeg North. I know she is a longstanding member of the finance committee and well versed in financial matters.

I must say that when my party cobbled together this deal with the NDP, initially I was surprised, but then I thought that it was a good thing, for three main reasons. First, it builds on some of the investments the government is already making in some of these social policy areas. Second, it gives us a chance to pass the budget. I think it is a very good budget and Canadians want this budget. For example, we want to see money start to move to municipalities and communities. Third, it basically exposes more clearly that the Conservative Party is in bed with the separatists, which we in the

House and in committees have known for some time now; it exposes it more clearly for Canadians.

I have a question for the member for Winnipeg North. One of the things coming out of this deal was that the corporate tax cuts were reversed or put off in some other fashion. I personally do not see corporate tax cuts as a means to an end in themselves, but I wonder if the member could comment on whether she thinks all tax cuts are bad or whether she sees any kind of positive relationship between cutting taxes and jobs and productivity.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from my colleague on the Liberal benches and I want to say that I am glad we were able to cooperate and come up with this better balanced budget.

I do take a little bit of umbrage with the member's comments, as well as those made previously by the parliamentary secretary, that these were items that were there and the Liberals are building on them. In fact, in terms of the February budget, there was nothing for education or for housing. We have been able to move the agenda and shift the government toward the priorities of Canadians.

On the question of corporate tax cuts, I think it is very important to remind the member that we are not talking about all tax cuts. We are not talking about the NDP's position on tax cuts. I can get into a long debate about that any time the hon. member wants. We are talking about this government's decision to suddenly insert into the February budget a \$4.6 billion cost by reducing the corporate tax rate despite the Prime Minister saying in the last election that there would be no new tax cuts until programs had been restored and investments were made in key areas.

All we have done is make the Prime Minister keep his word. We have tried to keep the Liberals honest. We are fulfilling the very commitments that Canadians heard in the last election. We look forward to continuing to have this cooperation.

● (1325)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been fascinating to listen to some of the comments, questions and answers, especially from the Conservatives opposite when they talked about their leader's flip-flop on this budget. What was very interesting was their talk about the \$5 billion for day care, when they said that the CAW predicted it would be \$6 billion and then said that the Liberals are wrong by 10 times our projection, or in other words, \$5 billion is really going to cost \$6 billion and we are 10 times out. And with that kind of math, people expect that party to run the government? It would be very interesting.

I want to pick up in my speech on where the parliamentary secretary started to set the groundwork for this budget, where it is coming in and why we are able to make this type of investment in Canadians, in their education, health care and environment, in agriculture, in equalization and in all the areas where we are able to invest. Of course that is because of the tremendous work we have done over the years to cut down the very large deficit we had, which has put us in the situation where we can make these types of investments.

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That confidence of the financial sectors in Canada continues today. I want to quote from today's *London Free Press*. Sherry Cooper, chief economist for BMO Nesbitt Burns, is one of the key economists in Canada and said today:

—Canada has no recession in sight over the next few years and will be a growth leader among Group of Seven countries.

And next year, Canada will lead the pack, tied for first place with the United States, Cooper said.

"Unlike the U.S., Canada has not had an economic recession in 14 years and no recession is in sight for the remainder of the decade," Cooper said.

Next year, Canada will be neck-and-neck with the U.S. with a three-per-cent growth pace....

The Quebec economy is expected to grow at annual rates of 2.6 per cent this year and 2.9 per cent in 2006....

Growth in the developing world will provide strong support for commodity prices, driven by China's huge demand for pulp, cement, coal, iron ore, steel and aluminum.

"This will translate into higher prices. Quebec and Canada's top export to China is pulp—and prices there are likely to edge upward from already high levels," Cooper told Montreal-area business officials.

Cooper noted Canada will be the only country among the G7 industrial powers—which include the United States, Japan, Germany, France, Britain and Italy—to have current account and budget surpluses in the coming years.

This management of the economy is why it gives me great pride today to be able to express support for this budget that builds so strongly on supporting the priorities of Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

In fact, I have been greatly anticipating today's debate, because I believe it will bring to light the shocking degree to which the priorities of the official opposition are out of step with those of Canadians.

After all, we are talking today about measures that reinforce and complement a budget that Canadians want to see passed as soon as possible.

They want to see it passed because it delivers on their priorities without compromising the extraordinary fiscal progress that has underpinned Canada's remarkable economic turnaround. They want it passed because it will create wealth, expand economic opportunities and strengthen our social foundations so that Canadians can share in the promise of our society. They want it passed because they are justifiably baffled by the daily dithering and flip-flopping as to where the official opposition actually stands with respect to this budget.

So without further ado, I would like to proceed with today's debate in the hope that the members of the official opposition will gain some insight into the importance of the issues at hand and maybe even come to some sort of conclusion they would be willing to share with the Canadian public about whether or not they support the measures in question.

As my colleagues have so eloquently explained, this bill provides increased support for a number of measures for which there is a great deal of public support, such as affordable housing construction and post-secondary education. However, I would like to dedicate my time today specifically to the provisions of this bill that provide for environmental initiatives such as public transit and the creation of a low income housing energy retrofit program.

●(1330)

As hon. members are no doubt aware, budget 2005 confirmed our commitment to transfer \$5 billion to cities and communities. The bill before us today would provide \$900 million for environmental initiatives, the bulk of which will be aimed at public transit in our cities and communities. It is money that can be used to invest in public transit systems that reduce pollution and gridlock and, in doing so, will help achieve our Kyoto targets and reduce the health care costs associated with pollution.

As I just mentioned, the bill would also dedicate a portion of the funding to support a new low income housing energy retrofit program that will benefit low income families and communities in a number of ways. First, these retrofits will greatly reduce the heating fuel requirements for thousands of low income Canadians across Canada. In doing so, it will leave these families with more disposable income that can be dedicated to other priorities.

At the same time, these retrofits will reduce emissions at the community level, again helping us reach our Kyoto targets and reducing the health costs associated with air pollution.

I know the Leader of the Opposition has characterized the bill as disgraceful, at least the week after he said that he was supporting it, so he clearly has not changed his mind about the importance of increased funding for the important public services provided by municipalities.

Where do other Canadians stand on this issue? Unlike the official opposition, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities was unequivocal in its analysis. It said:

This money will go directly toward meeting the needs of communities: fixing our streets and bridges, upgrading water treatment plants, improving and expanding public transit, and providing much needed services to people. We applaud the Government for recognizing the challenges Canadian cities and communities face and for taking action to help us meet these challenges.

Canadians and their representatives in the government understand first and foremost that their quality of life is not a means to an end. It is an end in itself. Canadians also understand very clearly that the bill represents an opportunity to improve our quality of life that cannot and must not be passed by.

Because the bill is a bill that addresses some of the highest priorities of Canadians, priorities like affordable housing, post-secondary education, the environment and foreign aid, make no mistake that these are the priorities of Canadians. I therefore urge hon. members to vote in favour of the bill.

I would like to talk about a number of other areas related to the environment that we have been promoting because it has not been talked about in great detail in the debate and it certainly is one of the priorities for Canadians.

We have put forward innovative initiatives in cooperation with business, the environment sector and individual Canadians to deal with the critical challenges facing us related to greenhouse gases, smog and the environment. Nowhere is this more prevalent than in my riding in the north where we see dramatic effects already of greenhouse gases and global warming.

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I was at a conference speaking to some of the many initiatives that Canada has already taken. We had already committed \$3.5 billion to global warming and the environment before the budget was introduced. The member who spoke before me suggested that it was still a philosophy. I had to set him right and I invited him to come to the northern part of Canada where it has a much greater and quicker effect so that he could see where the ice roads were melting at the detriment of our economy. That is the only way to get major shipments into many areas of the north. He will see where ice bridges are coming in much later and leaving much earlier. He will see where some of our first nation administration buildings were collapsing or shifting and had to be rebuilt or moved because of the melting of the permafrost. He will see the changes in our species and the critical effects on species that some northerners who still live a traditional lifestyle depend on.

That is why it was so important in the budget and through other mechanisms to support the environment. We put forth a climate fund. The climate fund is not just a direction that we should do this, this and this. It is not a rules based, punitive type of action. It is a fund where people and organizations can come forward with creative solutions.

• (1335)

Many Canadian environmental organizations and businesses have been very creative and they came forward with ways to save energy and thus reduce greenhouse gases. Energy consumption, of course, is the biggest producer of greenhouse gases. This is very innovative approach and will be a key part of our plan.

Another section of the plan is the partnership fund. Some of the provinces have some very innovative ideas and they want to work in partnership with us. Under the partnership fund the provinces and the territories can come together with us and move forward on some mega projects that will help the environment.

Another major section of this strategy is the auto emissions agreement, a tremendous agreement that we spent years negotiating with the auto industry. California, which is the only other area in the world that has done anything major, its auto emissions strategy is now up for possible court challenges and may never come fully into play. However, in our system, because it is voluntary and has been agreed to, it will be a major assistance to reducing smog, increasing the health of Canadians, reducing greenhouse gases and improving our climate.

Because of the government's, and in particular the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of the Environment, very effective negotiations and partnership with industry, we have the large emitters regulations. As members know, the large final emitters produce the biggest chunk of greenhouse gases in Canada and the attendant smog that has an effect on the health of Canadians.

We have worked for years to understand them individually and to come up with the types of regulations that will not harm them but will, because of the increased energy efficiency, allow them, as some of them have already done, to become more effective and more productive. Some would have suggested, although not those in the official opposition, that we just have one size fits all. However, economically, that could force some of those companies out of business because some have different processes, different indices

and different ways of creating greenhouse gases, some which can be controlled. That is why this is a very sophisticated, realistic and competitive part of our plan.

Another part of our plan, which, I have to admit, we have done a terrible job in this House of promoting, is the many energy efficiency programs that we already have in place.

We have some of the leading scientists in the world related to different types of renewable energies and reducing energy efficiencies to our housing programs, to solar energy, to biodiesel, to ethanol and to wind energy. All these programs, including part of our \$3.5 billion in investments, are in place and are moving along. They are being taken up at a faster rate by Canadians. They have been very successful and have removed thousands of tonnes of greenhouse gas, even before this budget, which of course adds some huge increase and promotion to our effort.

Over and above all those existing programs, we are adding new renewable energy programs to enhance other renewable energies. As members know, we had already increased by four times our wind energy subsidy to enhance that but now we are also going to invest in other renewable energies in this new program.

Another area that we are looking at is Canadian carbon sinks. This is another opportunity waiting to happen, an opportunity to help Canada do its part in its leadership role. We will be having the world meeting in Montreal shortly. To increase that leadership role, there is potential with these carbon sinks.

Whether it is in agriculture and the methods of agriculture that will leave greenhouse gasses in the earth for a longer time just by improving our processes or whether it is in forestry where there is lots of innovative research, we have some of the leading researchers. Canadian government scientists are some of the leading scientists in the world and are respected around the world for some of the work they are doing in how to manage the forests and improve them as greenhouse gas sequestration.

• (1340)

How long can we manage the forests? How long can we keep the carbon there and how long can the forests provide economies for rural Canadians living near those areas?

A majority of first nations people live near the boreal forest. They can play an important part in managing that to improve their economies. Through the economic opportunities available through the sequestration of greenhouse gases, they can have revenues in times when it is hard to have revenues, especially in the very far north where the forests, on their own and unmanaged, are not overly productive.

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We could look at ways of preserving forests and providing compensation to capture greenhouse gases as opposed to totally eliminating the forests, which sometimes takes hundreds of years to grow the farther north we go, and would not be economic from that perspective.

Another very dramatic contribution that we are making is to cut our emissions by one-third. For the Government of Canada to make a commitment like that to limit our greenhouse gases by one-third of what we now produce is a major commitment. Of course we cannot expect others to follow if we do not lead. We are asking far more of ourselves than of anyone else in the Kyoto plan.

The fact that we are asking of ourselves and of Canadians through the one tonne challenge is the reason we will have the moral authority to ask the rest of the world, the developing countries that have not yet gained as much from greenhouse gas emissions, such as China and India, to make huge contributions to them as developing countries in the first round. When we show our leadership then we will have the moral authority to ask them to come in on the second round with the major contributions that they can make.

It is not that we are not helping them already, as I am sure a few members of the House know. We are already dealing in clean coal technologies, another one of the areas in which we are performing a leadership function.

By helping China, which burns incredible amounts of coal and the greenhouse gases negatively affect Canadians, as they do everyone else in the world, with clean coal technologies to reduce its greenhouse gas reduction, helps us, and there is a lot more potential for that in the future.

With the investment in coal scrubbing, we can take out all the nitrous oxides, the sulphur dioxide and the mercury and we can sequester carbon dioxide, another project in which we are involved.

Another area where we have major investments of over \$10 million is the sequestration of CO₂ in mining properties in Alberta where we produce oil and gas. I am sure some members of the opposition from that area of the country would be quite interested in these very successful projects that are providing leadership in the world. We take carbon dioxide and store it underground. It also helps the petroleum industry to extract more oil and gas from those areas.

In conclusion, over and above probably the best received budget in Canadian history, starting of course with the approval of the leader of the official opposition, I am also proud of the amendments we have made because they are all areas that are important to us.

Everyone will agree that we have invested in foreign aid, housing, education, environment and public transit in the past. In a minority government it is good that we have come to an agreement to accelerate these contributions, which are important to Canadians and important to us, a bit faster than we had expected. This was the task put upon us by the people of Canada when they asked us to join with at least one other party in putting together a budget. I am very proud to support the budget that is so well received in the public.

• (1345)

I call upon all the parties in the House to join me in supporting economic development, the poor, education, health care, foreign aid,

and the cities of Canada and municipal infrastructure that will make Canada even more the best country in the world in which to live.

Mr. Richard Harris: Mr. Speaker, I realize my colleague from Wild Rose has an excellent question and I will defer to him.

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had a difficult time following the last speech. There was one thing I did catch. It was consistent with the throne speech, very consistent with the budget speech and now consistent once again. The word "agriculture" was used for about one-tenth of a second or so. It was slightly mentioned.

This wonderful new budget agreement that the government has come into with the leadership of the NDP talks about a lot of wonderful things, but agriculture is not mentioned once again. It is the same old story, agriculture is never mentioned and never solved.

I have heard that \$6 billion has gone to the farmers. I have news for those members. The money has not gone to the farmers. That is all a bunch of nonsense. These are big announcements that have been going on for a long time since I have been here. The money is not getting out to the farmers, or does this member not know how many people have gone broke and gone under and had to sell out because of the lack of funding? The funding just does not get out there.

I received a call a few minutes ago from a lady who said she had received her CAIS money after many dollars were spent getting accountants to help her. It was \$322.19. She had been waiting since 2003.

These NDP members are talking about a \$1.5 billion injection into education. Are they gullible enough to believe that it will actually happen? The government has not kept its word on anything. They make these big, flowery announcements and they do not pan out. It is time that Canadians woke up.

On the topic of this babysitting stuff or national day care, I would like this member to know that I have several communities in my riding with probably a population of 200 people. We have thousands and thousands of rural people who do not have access to day care anywhere. However, they will be expected to pay for it. They will be expected to fork over the taxes so the big city people can have their day cares. They receive no help in return for staying home with their children. There is no reward for that. They get taxed more than the people who go out and work.

It is becoming an absolutely one sided farce. I am really tired of it. I have said hardly anything in the last few days on this. I am getting tired of hearing these wonderful things this government is doing when it has failed. The government has failed the people in my riding. Every farmer can tell the government that it has failed dismally.

Government Orders

I do not know why in the world this outfit over there would shine up with the NDP that wants to throw more money around like crazy and not even mention once again agriculture, the people who are hurting on our land. When will the government wake up and start doing what is right for the people of Canada?

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, I spent about 20 minutes explaining what the government is doing that is right for the people of Canada. However, I always enjoy the member opposite. I know he is very committed to his work and very passionate, and he says what is on his mind.

In fact, I am delighted that he made the point that I have been trying to make for the last few weeks in the House concerning the consistency of this budget and the throne speech and our platform. In our platform and in our throne speech we talked about help for seniors.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1350)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): Order, please. The hon. member has the floor. We would like to hear his answer.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, as I was trying to say, I am delighted that the member has reinforced the point I was trying to make through the budget debates over the last few months. We have been consistent with our platform and with the throne speech. We followed right through with the budget. We have kept our promises which is what Canadians want. We kept our promise to support seniors, wind energy, day care and education. We kept our promise to have the biggest environmental budget in history.

Related to agriculture, imagine the party opposite running the country when two of its members have just said that there was not a cent toward agriculture. Well, where were they several weeks ago when we announced \$1 billion? If \$1 billion is nothing to them, if they cannot keep track of that from two weeks ago, how could they possibly run the country?

What is embarrassing is that they support the budget and then the next week they do not support it and force us into an agreement with another party and now they are complaining. What do the people who supported the Conservatives in Calgary think when their member has forced us to make this deal with the NDP? What do their constituents think when they flip-flop and cause us to make this deal? As a matter of fact, I am proud of this deal.

What do the people of their ridings think about the fact that they have never asked any questions over the last few months? In fact, their finance critic was asked to resign yesterday. When have they asked any questions about anything of our ministers? It would be fascinating if the press did a tally of how many times our ministers have been asked about government departments over the last few weeks.

I know we are not allowed to comment on who is here and who is not, but in question period there are empty seats over there because our ministers have not been asked about health care, the poor, agriculture, education, foreign aid, and all the issues that are important to Canadians. If we are not being held accountable, how could they provide a government?

When they talk about transparency, why are they not allowed to talk about what their constituents are saying? They were all told not to speak about what their constituents said about the election. Why are the members for Newmarket—Aurora or Central Nova not been heard from in the last few days? We would like to hear from all the Conservatives. There are actually two or three progressive ones there, unfortunately for us. It would be great to hear what they had to say.

The saddest result of all this, as everyone knows by looking at the polls, is that an upcoming election would increase the strength of the separatist movement in Canada. The fact that any members in the House would put their party, to get a few more seats, above the interests of Canada to set an environment where the conditions would be ripe for a referendum is a very sad position for that party and for Canadians. It would lead to potential difficulties in unity in this country and an expensive election that no one wants. Canadians have told us that and yet the other side will not take that leadership just as it would not on Iraq.

When I asked their leader why the party that was based on grassroots Reform Alliance and used to listen to their constituents did not listen to them when it came to the war on Iraq, he said, “We need to have leadership. We cannot listen to constituents”. They are doing that again by forcing an election which will cost \$250 million. They want to waste that. The polls show it will be another minority government which would waste another \$250 million. That is what is concerning Canadians.

I would therefore encourage both parties in the opposition to support this budget, probably the most popular budget in history, that helps Canadians in so many ways, helps the economy, the poor and the sick, education and first nations people. If I am asked another question, I will get into the embarrassing record of the opposition on helping first nations people. We are attempting to make progress in this budget and with the aboriginal round table.

• (1355)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to take the member up on it. This morning we had a motion on a report on aboriginal cultural affairs. I was very concerned that the opposition did not want to put up people to debate the issues in the report nor to ask questions related to the report. I would simply ask the hon. member, could he make a comment on that and how important cultural matters are to the first nations?

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, I was never so shocked as I was yesterday in the House when Her Majesty's loyal opposition actually proposed in a member's statement that they would help first nations people after all the times they have voted against land claims agreements. Nothing has changed. We added money to the budget to help aboriginal people and we are making progress, but that party voted against that, and those members speak against it in their speeches.

This morning one of their members talked about our quiet member for Nunavut who was speaking up for the rural aboriginal people in northern Canada and who actually went against our party on a motion. They said this was procedural wrangling.

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They originally supported and now are voting against our budget that has money for health care for aboriginal people, lifelong learning, housing, economic opportunities and land claims. The opposition has the absolute nerve to suggest, after all these attacks on the progress for aboriginal—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): The hon. member for Portage—Lisgar.

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the very exciting and prominent new member of the House of Commons, the member for Edmonton—Spruce Grove.

In my four minutes I would like to refer to a Toronto story. I know the *Toronto Star* is hardly a bastion of conservatism, but it has an article that says, “PM's spending spree smacks of desperation”. It certainly does, but it also should strike fear into the hearts of anyone who understands fundamental money management.

We are talking about \$1.25 billion a day for the last three weeks that has been committed by the government opposite in contravention of the most fundamental principles of money management, without due regard for the process of evaluation, and without a plan. The Liberals are so desperate for ideas over there that they have gone to the NDP for help. It is pathetic. If Canadians wanted an NDP budget, they would have elected more than 19 members of Parliament for that party. They did not.

An article in the *Globe and Mail* today was entitled “Liberal spending blitz hits \$19.5 billion”. It said:

Toronto-Dominion Bank chief economist Don Drummond said he believes the Liberals are obliged to table an economic update to tell Canadians how all this new spending fits in the fiscal plan.

It went on:

To tell you the truth, I would think everybody's sort of lost track.

The fact of the matter is that the government is desperate. It is corrupt. It is indecent and dangerous. It is selling this country's fiscal future down the river as it will do anything to cling to power. It is trying to cover up a vote buying scandal with another vote buying scandal. It is trying to buy its way out of trouble. One thing is absolutely for certain, Canadians are on to it. Canadians understand what got the Liberal Party into this mess and Canadians are not interested in being bought by their own money.

Here is another comment from another article today. This is interesting. This is from Michael Murphy, senior vice-president of policy for the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. He said:

The government has clearly made a decision to spend its way to the next election. They've now basically said: “To heck with that budget, here's new stuff”.

It's back to the future for the Liberals. This is what got us into the massive deficit financing of the past, the whole principle of concentrating benefits, making promise after promise regardless of the legitimacy of the spending or regardless and disrespectful of a plan of any kind.

They threw it around in a one and a half page bill that the NDP members sold themselves out for. We knew that the NDP members would prostitute themselves, but they did it cheaply in this case because this is a one and a half page bill with no commitments on the

part of the government other than to do orders in council in broad general categories.

For example, the Liberals claimed to care about aboriginal housing. They are going to address aboriginal housing, but without a plan, how can they possibly do that?

● (1400)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): It being 2 o'clock we will now proceed with statements by members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, May marks Asian Heritage Month, an occasion for Canadians across the country to reflect on the contributions of people of Asian heritage to the building of Canada.

Asian Heritage Month was first celebrated in Toronto in 1993, followed by celebrations in many cities across Canada. In December 2001 the government officially recognized the month of May as Asian Heritage Month. In schools, community centres and workplaces Canadians are invited and encouraged to improve their understanding and appreciation of the often neglected yet important contributions Asian Canadians have made to our country.

As elected representatives, we should take pride in the accomplishments of all the diverse citizens of this remarkable country.

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SUTTON FAIR

Mr. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, August 4 to 7 will herald the 150th Sutton Fair. The fair's historical roots as an agricultural exhibition of animals, crops and handicrafts continues today, but the Sutton Fair is much more now, offering midway flash, entertainment, contests, shopping and food, the Sutton Fair ambassador contest and the Georgina Idol talent competition. Today there is something for everyone, young and old, city or country, resident, cottager or visitor.

In the 1800s members of Parliament Conservative Richard Tyrwhitt and Liberal William Mulock displayed their animals at the fair. Even Prime Minister Mackenzie King, although he was twice rejected by local voters as MP, came to open the fair as prime minister in 1925. It is an event not to be missed.

This August I hope to see everyone at the fair.

* * *

THUNDER BAY BOMBERS

Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pride to rise today to congratulate the members of the Thunder Bay Bombers senior men's hockey team on their Allan Cup win. Two provinces and two time zones away from home, this team made the incredible and improbable a complete reality in a four to three overtime victory.

Thunder Bay has now claimed the Allan Cup a record 10 times. This remarkable win brings the national championship back to Thunder Bay and the province of Ontario for the first time in 16 years.

The Thunder Bay Bombers represent nearly every facet of hockey in the community of Thunder Bay. Team members include former Lakehead University Thunderwolves, pro players, alumni of the former Thunder Bay Junior Flyers, and minor hockey coaches.

Please join me in congratulating the Thunder Bay Bombers in another of a long series of Allan Cup victories.

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[*Translation*]

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on May 4, the women of the Pay Equity Network demonstrated on Parliament Hill calling on members of Parliament to pass proactive pay equity legislation.

On Saturday some 5,000 women, gathered in Quebec City to welcome the world march of women's global charter for humanity, called for pay equity, among other things.

Over a year ago, the federal pay equity task force published its report recommending passing new legislation. One year later, the Liberal government still has not tabled a bill to correct the present injustices. Under current legislation, the onus is on women to file complaints.

Need I remind the House that equal pay for work of equal value is a human right? What is the government waiting for to acknowledge this through appropriate legislation?

* * *

• (1405)

[*English*]

FAMILY EXPO

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this weekend there is a wonderful event occurring in my riding of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. Atlantic Canada's first family expo entitled "We Love Our Children" will be held this weekend, May 14 and 15, at the Dartmouth Sportsplex. It will feature three pavilions that will host parenting workshops, information on family travel, health, nutrition, education and much more.

There will be entertainment by top family entertainers, including Treehouse's Max and Ruby, Razzmatazz for Kids and CBC Party with Mark and Clifford. Featured speakers include former MuchMusic VJ and current TV host of *Yummy Mummy*, Erica Ehm, math specialist John Mighton and Daisy Rock guitar inventor, Tish Ciravolo.

This unique event for Atlantic Canada is dedicated to our most valuable resource, our children. Check out the website at familyexpo.ca.

This event would not have happened without the tremendous efforts of volunteers and in particular the hard work and dedication

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of Suzanne Morrison and Andree Gracie. I wish them all the best and look forward to being there.

* * *

LUPUS

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is World Lupus Day, an opportunity to increase awareness of this disease with a thousand faces.

Lupus is a disease in which the immune system attacks the body's own healthy cells causing tissue damage, organ failure, and in some cases, death. Lupus can strike any tissue or organ in the body, including the skin, muscles, blood vessels, lungs, heart, and brain. Over 50,000 Canadians are affected by lupus. It strikes men, women and children of all ages, but primarily women during the child-bearing years.

While new research brings promising findings each year, there remains no cure for lupus. Early detection and treatment can help to slow the debilitating effects of the disease. However, many physicians are unaware of the symptoms. As a result, many people suffer for years before obtaining the correct diagnosis and treatment.

There is an urgent need to increase lupus awareness. I would like to applaud organizations like Lupus Canada and the Lupus Erythematosus Society of Saskatchewan for providing support for those affected by this disease and raising awareness of lupus.

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CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' lust for power hit new lows when their deputy leader compared his party's efforts to topple the government to what transpired in Ukraine last fall. It is particularly hypocritical since the Conservatives initially tried to scuttle my motion in the House last October for Canadian involvement in Ukraine's orange revolution.

In Ukraine it was the government that would not respect the will of the people. In Canada it is the opposition that does not respect the will of the people by trying to force an election that two-thirds of Canadians clearly do not want. In Ukraine it was the government that falsely tried innocent people. In Canada it is the Conservative-separatist alliance that falsely passes judgment prior to Justice Gomery's issuing his findings.

Just as former Ukrainian President Kuchma fanned the flames of separatism in Ukraine to retain power, in Canada the Conservative Party leader is willing to do the same to attain power.

The Conservatives trivialize the sacrifices of millions of Ukrainians. Clearly their leader is no Yushchenko.

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[*Translation*]

DOMINIQUE CHEVALIER

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to acknowledge the commitment of a great citizen of Drummond to the cause of women.

Since 1986, Dominique Chevalier has been running Partance, an agency serving women in the regional municipality of Drummond who are seeking employment.

In addition to her involvement in women's groups, she participates in the Conférence régionale des élus de la région 17, the Conseil régional des partenaires du marché du travail, and the Corporation de développement communautaire in Drummond, and she chairs the board of the Femmes et production industrielle regions 4 and 17.

In its recent women of merit competition, the YMCA gave her an award for her social commitment. At the Réseau industriel Drummond awards gala, she won the 2005 award for best business coach.

On behalf of the people of Drummond and my colleagues, I congratulate Dominique Chevalier, a woman of distinction.

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[*English*]

GRENADA

Hon. Jean Augustine (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after almost eight months since hurricane Ivan devastated the island of Grenada, I wish to report to my colleagues that there are encouraging signs of recovery on the island state.

Grenadian Canadians, NGOs, and the Government of Canada responded to the emergency needs. They sent a tonne of relief materials and to date the Government of Canada has contributed \$10.7 million.

As the Prime Minister's special adviser on Grenada, I visited Grenada to assess the status of the ongoing reconstruction efforts headed by the Agency for Reconstruction and Development.

Canadians have continued to show their desire to help, and I would like to thank all Canadians for their unrelenting support. There is still much work that needs to be done to rebuild the island to pre-Ivan conditions. I encourage all hon. members to help Grenadians "Build Back Better", which is the theme of their rebuilding efforts.

* * *

• (1410)

CALGARY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Calgary Airport Authority has set the standard for efficiency, convenience and consumer satisfaction. Travellers from around the globe praise the Calgary airport for its ingenuity and responsiveness to the needs of air travellers. It is an exciting, modern gateway to Calgary.

In just 13 years since its transfer from the bureaucratic rule of the federal government to a non-profit local authority, it has become the

leading airport in Canada. No longer a drag on the federal treasury, the Calgary airport pays its way and contributes handsomely to the federal treasury.

The Liberal government has taken advantage of this success. In 2005 the airport will pay \$25 million in excess rent to the federal government. This gouging is unfair to Calgary and to the air travelling public, reducing competitiveness and hindering growth.

When the previous Conservative government transferred the airport to a local authority, we never intended the airport to become a cash cow for the Liberal government. While the minister's announcement yesterday to avert an immediate crisis in federal airport rents is a positive first step, the ongoing punitive rents charged to the Calgary Airport Authority remain an unfair burden to the travelling public and a disincentive to further progress.

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[*Translation*]

CITÉ ÉTUDIANTE DE LA HAUTE-GATINEAU

Mr. David Smith (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw attention to the remarkable performance by the representatives of the Vallée-de-la-Gatineau at the 2005 Défi sportif held in Montreal from April 27 to May 1.

Thirteen young students from the Cité étudiante de la Haute-Gatineau in Maniwaki proudly took part in the various challenges at this international sports event for young people living with physical or intellectual disabilities.

Our dynamic delegation came away with two gold medals, no less, both won by Dany Langevin-Lajeunesse.

Congratulations to teachers and staff who made it possible for these 13 athletes to be part of this enriching and rewarding experience. My warmest congratulations once again to the practical training group from the Cité étudiante de la Haute-Gatineau.

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[*English*]

DAIRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again I rise in this House to ask the Liberal government why it refuses to take action to defend supply management at the international level. Last year Canadian farmers lost \$171 million in market share from imports of modified milk products.

Under article 28 of the GATT we have the tools to protect supply management, but the government refuses to act. Time and time again, dairy farmers have asked the government to apply article 28 and all they get is evasion and denial. When I hear the agriculture minister say that he is exploring ways to position the industry, I hear Liberal doublespeak that tells Canadian farmers the government will take concerns that need action now and put them on the long slow train to Palookaville.

Canadian farmers deserve better. Other countries stand up and fight for their farmers. I am calling upon the government to stand up and defend supply management and apply article 28 now.

* * *

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mr. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the health minister's inaction is putting Canada's prescription drug supply in jeopardy. For months he has promised to present options on the cross-border drug trade. He promised to bring options to the Commons health committee but to date we have seen nothing.

Developments in the U.S. are quickly overtaking the minister. City and state governments are passing laws to allow bulk imports of Canadian prescription drugs. A number of bills before Congress would give the go-ahead to this practice. Bulk sales could create shortages for Canadian patients and threaten our price controls. It is time for the ministers to stop talking and start acting.

Canadian Internet pharmacies, or at least most of them, are not interested in bulk sales to the U.S. Without some regulation, bulk exports could soon be a reality. When will the health minister start supporting the Conservative Party position and block bulk exports of prescription drugs?

* * *

• (1415)

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is ignoring the wishes of most of the parliamentarians in this House.

It started in October, when the Bloc Québécois introduced a subamendment to the throne speech calling for the resolution of the fiscal imbalance. Although it received the unanimous support of Parliament, the Liberal government has ignored it.

The federal government's disdain has reached new heights with its insouciant approach to the majority decisions of this House, for example, the creation of a plan to help older workers, the creation of a trust account for the tainted money and the reversal of the decision to close nine RCMP detachments in Quebec.

Do we have to hire Earncliffe or Groupaction to get our message across?

Since the start of the 38th Parliament, this government has been besmirching democracy. It will have to acknowledge the confidence vote and act accordingly.

* * *

[English]

MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Works has a horrible habit. He says one thing when he means another, or is it that he means one thing and

Oral Questions

misquotes another? After all, he spends question period quoting from the day to day testimony of newspaper columnists.

Just take Lorne Gunter's *Edmonton Journal* column from Friday, which the minister used as proof positive that he was on the right side of the sponsorship scandal. But wait, as Mr. Gunter points out in his Sunday column, "Skippie the wonder puppet" took the reference out of context.

Let me correct the minister and tell him what Mr. Gunter really thinks about the Prime Minister's intrepid sock puppet: "Do you ever notice how he looks as guilty as a Liberal about it? He's been totally co-opted".

I could almost feel sorry for Skippie, a man that the former lieutenant governor of Ontario, Hal Jackman, called "a disgrace to our political system" and "a sleaze of the worst order". Then again, he would probably just misquote that and think it was a compliment.

* * *

VE DAY

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Canada's veterans.

I had an opportunity this past weekend to participate in the Brant Liberation of the Netherlands parade. The parade, which took place in Brantford on Sunday, May 8, was an event which marked the liberation of the Netherlands and the end of the second world war.

It was an honour to welcome the Vice Consul of the Netherlands, Mr. Loek Felten, to Brantford to take part in such a significant event.

I would like to personally thank the organizers of this tremendous event and pay special tribute to the many veterans who gave so much of themselves for our rights and our freedoms. Our debt to them is beyond calculation.

I also wish to pay tribute to the Brant Naval Veterans Association for its weekend events marking the 60th anniversary of the Battle of the Atlantic.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE BUDGET

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in its deal with the NDP, the government claimed it would remove some tax relief measures from the budget, yet budget legislation before this House does not exclude any of these tax measures. Can the Prime Minister clarify whether the tax measures are in or out of the budget?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have indicated that we are anxious to move forward with the tax arrangements that are contained in Bill C-43. It is clear that if those measures were put to the House now the bill would not succeed. Therefore, there are two of those measures which we propose in the appropriate way to put in a separate piece of legislation.

Oral Questions

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): In other words, Mr. Speaker, the government's present budget legislation before the House does not actually describe its budgetary policy.

Let me ask another question. In its deal, the government claimed it would immediately spend more money on NDP priorities. The new budget bill is unclear if or when that money will be spent, whether it will be done this year or next year or in any year at all. Can the Prime Minister tell us exactly when the government plans to spend that money?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when one takes a look at what those items are in terms of post-secondary education, the environment and foreign aid, those happen to be Liberal priorities, they happen to be NDP priorities and they happen to be Canadian priorities.

It would be very good if the opposition were to join with us on—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

• (1420)

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if they are such important priorities one would think the government would be able to tell us when it is actually going to implement them.

[*Translation*]

The Prime Minister refuses to acknowledge the existence of the fiscal imbalance, but he has now met with the premiers of Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Ontario, and soon Saskatchewan as well, to settle it.

When will the Prime Minister admit to all the premiers, including the premier of Quebec, that fiscal imbalance does exist?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the agreement reached this past weekend with the Government of Ontario meets the priorities of the government, of the people of Ontario, and of all Canadians, priorities such as post-secondary education and the environment.

There were also some issues specific to Ontario, among them immigration. Ontario was, for example, the only province not to have concluded an agreement on training. That was a shortcoming that had to be remedied, and we did so.

* * *

[*English*]

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, sworn evidence showing illegal election payments implicates people right up into the office of the Prime Minister. Liberal officials are confessing to money laundering and campaign law breaking.

The Liberal response is to attack these whistleblowers. Sworn testimony was given that witnesses were threatened with ruined reputations. Liberal lawyers are now busy backing that up with lawsuits.

Why are Liberals outraged only when one of their own spills the beans?

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I asked this question yesterday: what has the member forgotten about fundamental justice? It is an abuse of the privileges of this House to use it to slander people who cannot respond in this House.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government knows that Gomery will never be able to name names. They have tied his hands with clause k. But senior Liberal party organizers and key ad scam figures are naming names. They disclose that thousands in laundered cash were handed to Liberal staffers now running ministers' offices, including the PMO.

This scheme is corroborated by top Liberals such as Corbeil, Béliveau, Brault and Thiboutot. Why does the government simply ignore this testimony?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again the hon. member questions the mandate of Justice Gomery because she wants to cast a pall over the work of Justice Gomery. She wants to try to attack his credibility because she is afraid that his report will actually show Canadians that this Prime Minister has acted honourably.

The fact is that clause k has been in several inquiries, including the Arar inquiry, the Walkerton inquiry held by a Conservative government in the province of Ontario, the Stonechild inquiry called by an NDP government in Saskatchewan, and the Grange inquiry held by, again, a Conservative government in Ontario. Clause k is a standard part of basically the mandate of any government inquiry.

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[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today is the moment of truth for the Liberals, who no longer have the moral authority to govern. The motion that will be brought before the House recommends that the government resign. This is clearly a non-confidence motion, and the three opposition parties recognize it as such.

Will the Prime Minister respect the will of the elected representatives of the people, recognize that he no longer has the confidence of the House and call an election?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Bloc Québécois is well aware of the fact that, according to the experts, this is a procedural matter and not a confidence motion. The committees are their own masters. They are entitled to make their own decisions, and we will await the committee's decision.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in 1926, following the tabling of a similar vote of non-confidence, Mackenzie King, a Liberal Prime Minister, realized that he no longer had the support of the House and resigned. He did not hang on. He respected the convention on confidence. In short, he acted as a responsible head of government, and history testifies to that fact.

Like Mackenzie King before him, will the Prime Minister act like a worthy and dignified head of government and respect the will of this House?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the leader of the Bloc Québécois must know that there will be many occasions, in connection with the budget and the opposition days, before the month is over to move non-confidence motions here in the House.

The government is quite prepared to be judged, but only judged following a motion of non-confidence, according to tradition.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the substance of the motion this evening is very clear. The intentions are obvious. Parliament will have an opportunity to withdraw its confidence in this government.

Will the Prime Minister acknowledge that the rules of Parliament, while providing some guidance on the matter of confidence, leave the Prime Minister with some responsibility to demonstrate his judgment and his sense of democracy, and that in this regard he must consider tonight's vote a vote of confidence?

[English]

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said previously, this motion is not a matter of confidence. The vote this evening is not a matter of confidence. It is a procedural motion to refer a report back to the committee. We certainly will not prejudice what the committee might do. The committee could choose to defeat that amendment. It could choose to change that amendment.

With respect to the example provided from 1926, I would suggest that my hon. colleague reread it, because it in fact proves the point that we are making. In 1926 it was a report coming out of committee, not a report going into committee—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[Translation]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this evening the Prime Minister will find himself having to rise above partisan considerations and recognize that he no longer enjoys the confidence of Parliament.

Does the Prime Minister intend to honour this democratic vote or to plunge Canada into an unprecedented political and constitutional crisis by clinging to his job?

[English]

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can only hope that you will ignore some of the hysteria coming from the hon. member across the way.

The obligation we as a government have is to provide opposition days and in fact those are provided. There are a couple of bills in the House that are in fact confidence issues. They are budget bills. When they collapse, there will be a confidence vote. Those are legitimate measures of confidence. I would encourage the House to get on with debating the budget bill.

Oral Questions

I indicated earlier on that there will be opposition days by the end of May, when the opposition members can in fact hold the government to account with a confidence motion if they so choose.

* * *

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think Canadians are rightly disgusted by the spectacle of this Parliament. They are tuning us out and turning us off. They see us being far more interested in ourselves and our own political interests than in the interests and needs that they and their families have. This is the crisis we are at.

Will the Prime Minister accept some responsibility for this mess because in the end we can only learn from the mistakes that we admit?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe the point raised by the leader of the NDP is very well taken. I think all party leaders, and indeed all members of Parliament, should accept the responsibility. In terms of the civility of the debate in the House, there is no doubt that there has been a substantial deterioration in words used and accusations made. Allegations which people would not make outside of the House are made here without any inhibitions. I think we all suffer and the House suffers when Canadians watch question period and the nature and the way it has evolved. I would hope we can improve that.

* * *

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the self-centred politics we have seen is what makes it so difficult to get things done around here. For example, getting a better budget adopted is blocked by self-centred politics. It meant that extraordinary steps in extraordinary situations had to be taken to see the charter on veterans adopted, and we are pleased that has happened. We worked very hard to try to get a better budget put together and to have it adopted.

My question is for the chairman of the public accounts committee. Is he willing to commit today that the vote today will not be put before the committee until we have had—

• (1430)

The Speaker: The hon. chair of the public accounts committee and member for Edmonton—St. Albert.

Mr. John Williams (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that the leader of the New Democratic Party is jumping the gun. We have not had the vote yet. Therefore, there has been nothing referred to the public accounts committee on this issue yet.

*Oral Questions***SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM**

Ms. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the trail of dirty money winds its way to the Prime Minister, it is clear he is breaking another promise to Canadians. Yesterday, we heard that his supporter and the Minister of Transport's aide, Richard Mimeau, received \$6,000 in dirty money to cover campaign expenses.

Two months ago, the Prime Minister said, "Anybody who knew about that and did nothing should resign immediately". That person has not quit. When will the Prime Minister finally keep a promise to Canadians and fire Mr. Mimeau?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize what the hon. member said on March 10 in a press release. She said:

Forcing an election would paralyse federal government activities and hurt Canadians...It is also imperative that the Gomery inquiry gets to the bottom of the sponsorship [issue]...An election now would prevent Justice Gomery from finishing his work as scheduled, and may put the whole commission in jeopardy. I believe Canadians are not anxious to fork over another \$250 million [for] another election so soon after the last one.

That is what she said on March 10.

Ms. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all of this before they changed the budget. The Prime Minister was quick to fire those people associated with his predecessor, Mr. Chrétien, but apparently he has lost his nerve when it comes to his own cronies.

Mr. Mimeau is a key Quebec lieutenant and a supporter of the Prime Minister. He is an aide to the Minister of Transport. It is no longer just about the old guard, it is people who are working right here, right now.

Why should Canadians believe the Prime Minister did not know any of this when the trail is leading right to his door?

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, frankly, because the individuals in question have absolutely and completely denied the allegations and have asked their lawyers to take action on it. What the member has to remember is that people do have rights in this country whether or not they are demonstrated on the floor of the House.

[Translation]

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Benoît Corbeil tells us that two employees from the office of the Minister of Transport received tainted money from Groupaction: his press attaché, Irène Marcheterre apparently received \$5,000 and Richard Mimeau, \$6,000.

When will this tainted money be returned, as the Prime Minister has promised?

[English]

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it would be interesting to spend a little time with Marleau and Montpetit which talks about the privileges of the House and what it confers on members. It confers grave responsibilities on those who are protected by it. By that I mean specifically the hon. members of this place. The consequences of its abuse can be terrible.

Innocent people could be slandered with no redress available to them.

I would caution hon. members to use a little judgment.

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, members of the House also have the right to have their questions answered in question period.

Last week we learned that the transport minister was lobbying without properly registering himself as a lobbyist as is required by law. Now we learn that two people who are working in his office received dirty sponsorship money.

My simple question for the Prime Minister is, when will the dirty money be returned to taxpayers like the Prime Minister promised?

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. member that those two individuals have absolutely and completely denied it and they are taking action to defend themselves, which they have the right to do. We should not jump to the execution before we have had the trial.

• (1435)

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the comments made by Benoît Corbeil at the Gomery inquiry are very incriminating and implicate members of the Liberal Party of Canada. Whether they are accusations or allegations the result is the same: dirty sponsorship money was used to pay election workers.

In light of these damning revelations, does the Prime Minister not feel that he has no choice but to put the dirty sponsorship money received by the Liberal Party into a trust?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, these are unfounded allegations. Legal action was taken following Mr. Corbeil's testimony yesterday.

The only way to know all the facts is to have Justice Gomery's report. Canadians and Quebeckers want this report. The interests of Canadians are more important than the interests of separatists.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, are we to understand by the minister's comments that all those who did not send a formal notice are acknowledging their guilt?

Jean Brault, Michel Béliveau and Benoît Corbeil all said the same thing, that the sponsorship cash was used by the Liberal Party to pay election workers in violation of the Canada Elections Act.

In light of all this mounting testimony, does the Prime Minister realize that the only solution left to the government is to deposit the dirty sponsorship money into a trust?

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the House yesterday afternoon that Bloc member said the following, "We want to leave Canada. So let us. That is exactly what we want".

Oral Questions

Despite the attempts of Bloc members to hide their separatist agenda, their true intentions come through. They want this Parliament to fail because they want this country to fail. It is time for the Conservatives to stop lying down with the Bloc and start standing up for Canadians who want this Parliament to be sustained.

[Translation]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Yet, Mr. Speaker, we did not buy three elections with dirty money.

On the eve of the last election, the Minister of Transport made a commitment, on behalf of the Quebec wing of the Liberal Party of Canada, to put the dirty money in trust.

How can the minister explain that it was necessary to put the dirty money from the sponsorships in trust last year, and now, with all that is coming out in the Gomery inquiry, it is apparently no longer appropriate to do the same?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are also allegations that the Parti Québécois received inappropriate funds. The Bloc thinks that, if the separatists are the ones getting dirty money, it is not as dirty.

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if the government insists on bringing up the subject of the Parti Québécois, why does it not follow its example and put the money in trust immediately?

In light of the revelations in the Gomery inquiry, clearly the government no longer has our confidence. Under the circumstances, there is no question of this government running another election on dirty money.

What is the Prime Minister waiting for before creating a trust account as the House is asking him to, and putting the dirty sponsorship money into it immediately?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the party has been clear. If the party has received any inappropriate funds, the party will reimburse the taxpayers. There is one leader who is working to clean up this system and that leader is our Prime Minister. If the separatists do not believe the allegations against some within their ranks, perhaps they ought to support the work of our Prime Minister and wait for Justice Gomery's report.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice has said four times in the House that he was unable to do anything about political interference in the appointment of judges because of the Gomery commission.

Yesterday, Justice Gomery confirmed that he did not have the authority to inquire into this other scandal. The Minister of Justice was well aware that Justice Gomery could not investigate this serious matter.

Why did the Minister of Justice attempt to mislead the House yet again?

The Speaker: The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice. However, I do have some reservations about the formulation of the question.

● (1440)

[English]

Hon. Paul Harold Macklin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, clearly the Gomery commission is well established. We set out the guidelines that follow in a normal way and fashion and it complies with the normal rules that we would expect of a judicial commission. I think that is appropriate.

Mr. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister keeps saying that Gomery will get to the bottom of this. The rules say that he cannot.

The Minister of Justice misled the House when he said that Justice Gomery would investigate admissions of Liberal tampering in the process of appointing judges. Yesterday Justice Gomery confirmed what the Minister of Justice knew—

The Speaker: Order, please. I was speaking with the Clerk and did not hear all that the hon. member said, but I understand he suggested that the minister misled the House. He knows that making these kinds of statements are not proper.

If he will put his question directly, we will proceed and I will review the blues and, if necessary, have a withdrawal from the hon. member.

Mr. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, the minister told the House that Gomery would investigate these questions. Gomery says that he has no authority to do that because his hands are tied.

Since the Prime Minister has tied Gomery's hands, will the Minister of Justice stop telling Canadians that Gomery will take care of it and call for a full investigation into his own party's tampering in the appointment of judges?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the opposition members are attacking the mandate of Justice Gomery. They realize, after months of work, after months of testimony, after \$72 million invested in getting to the truth by Justice Gomery, after 12 million pages of documents being reviewed by the Gomery commission and countless days of testimony, that there has not been a scintilla of evidence that has in any way demonstrated that our Prime Minister has acted inappropriately.

They are attacking the mandate of Justice Gomery to try to discredit it because they do not feel they will like the result of his work.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Too bad Gomery was not looking at Earnscliffe, Mr. Speaker.

Oral Questions

We know the Prime Minister believes that post-secondary education, the environment and low incomes are all his number one priorities. He basically confirmed that earlier in question period. Yet his NDP deal, as reflected in Bill C-48, does not establish programs for any of those number one priorities. Funding if necessary, but not necessarily funding for his number one priorities.

Has the Prime Minister explained to the NDP that the money for all of his number one priorities will not flow until the fall of 2006, if it flows at all?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the legislation makes very clear that the government is seeing access to funds in fiscal year 2005-06 and fiscal year 2006-07. The terms of that access are very clearly spelled out in Bill C-48, as well as the purposes of the money in terms of the broad categories.

It is now obviously up to the relevant government departments to develop the specific programs that will dedicate those funds to the purposes described in Bill C-48.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance revealed that the Prime Minister's deal with Premier McGuinty really was not worth the napkin on which it was written. Basically in an interview, when the parliamentary secretary was asked about funding for this, he said, "Well, there's a reasonable chance" that the money would not flow to Ontario.

When the Prime Minister struck his deal with Premier McGuinty, did he tell the premier that there was a reasonable chance that the money would not flow?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously there are important elements of the arrangement with Ontario that are dependent upon very important conduct in the House of Commons, including the passage of the budget.

I would remind the finance critic for the opposition that within a couple of hours of the announcement of the budget plan on February 23 he said "this budget is a step in the right direction".

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[Translation]

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec. Soon, the House will be asked to vote on Bill C-9, which reinforces the role of this agency in Quebec.

Can the minister tell us why the Bloc Québécois intends to vote against this bill? Why is the Bloc voting against the economic development of Quebec?

Hon. Jacques Saada (Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec and Minister responsible for the Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the stakeholders in the social economy, the municipalities and the regions of Quebec want this bill, and the Bloc is voting against it. The federal budget includes an additional \$307 million for Quebec alone, and the Bloc is voting against it.

The Bloc Québécois is voting against the economic diversification of the regions, against the most vulnerable communities, against research and innovation and against Montreal's development. In my opinion, the Bloc is putting its interests ahead of Quebec's. Canada has always played a fundamental role in Quebec's economic development and it will continue to do so, despite the Bloc Québécois.

* * *

• (1445)

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on a number of occasions in the past I have felt that concentration in Parliament on corruption, scandals and things like that were putting a larger question at risk, and that is the long term sustainability of our environment, which, if we do not save, all these other questions become academic.

I am particularly worried now about the Devils Lake diversion. We only have until June before that water starts to flow. I am concerned that if we have an election, the government, which is already not focused enough on that issue, may become even less focused.

What is the government's plan, election or no election, to make sure that dirty water does not flow into Manitoba's ecosystem ever?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can tell the House that when the Prime Minister met with the president and when I met with Ms. Rice, the secretary of state, we insisted that the case of Devils Lake be brought to the borders board which is the place at the commission to really look into it.

This is not a case of Canadians versus Americans here. Many Americans are on our side and they do realize that the Devils Lake diversion should not take place.

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MAHER ARAR INQUIRY

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, shamefully, no minister in the government is taking responsibility to ensure that justice prevails in the Arar inquiry.

Before recusing himself, the justice minister acknowledged the dangers of trampling human rights and trashing justice in the name of security.

In contrast, the fisheries minister, assigned explicitly to ensure justice for Arar, is defending non-disclosure, justifying lack of transparency and deferring to the public security czar.

Why is the Prime Minister's government, in the name of security, stonewalling the inquiry's pursuit of justice?

Hon. Geoff Regan (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure my hon. colleague that I have instructed the officials to make the fullest disclosure possible in keeping with the security and safety of police work.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in this Liberal lottery, the government has announced spending of \$22 billion over and above the \$42 billion already promised. Don Drummond, chief economist with the TD Bank, has said the government appears to have lost all sense of how much money is involved. After more than 10 years of sacrifices by Canadians, these financial follies could well put the country back in a deficit.

Will the Prime Minister acknowledge that he is drifting toward economic disaster in an effort to keep his government afloat?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the newspaper stories and the websites to which the hon. gentleman refers are clearly in error. They are adding together apples and oranges and bananas and coming up with pineapples and not making any sense whatsoever.

The fact of the matter is that all of these spending plans of the Government of Canada fit within our fiscal framework.

Mr. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is why the finance minister should provide a full accounting to the House. At least former finance minister John Turner had the integrity to resign when Mr. Trudeau flip-flopped on fiscal and monetary policy in 1975.

In fact, only one month ago the finance minister said, “You can’t, after the fact, begin to cherry-pick”, meaning the budget. He added, “If you engage in that exercise, it is an absolute, sure formula for the creation of a deficit”.

Will the finance minister show some ministerial accountability, admit that he has made deficits a real possibility, admit that the Prime Minister has cherry-picked his budget and resign?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): No, Mr. Speaker, I most certainly will not. The fact is the budget, in the form of Bill C-43, was proceeding very nicely through the House of Commons until a certain event on April 21 when that gentleman’s party reversed itself 180 degrees, flip-flopped from support to opposition and joined with the separatist party to try to defeat both the government and the budget.

We were elected in this minority Parliament to make this Parliament work. Therefore we found another configuration that would allow the budget and fiscal responsibility a decent chance to survive.

* * *

●(1450)

THE BUDGET

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John’s South—Mount Pearl, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has said that the Atlantic accord must be part of the total budgetary process and in fact that it must remain in the omnibus bill. Yet today we see Bill C-48 introduced as a separate two page piece of legislation.

If the government can introduce a stand-alone bill to legitimize the NDP buyout, why can he not introduce one for Atlantic Canadians who are losing millions of dollars every week because of government game playing?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the legislation implementing the Atlantic accords is before the House already. It is in Bill C-43.

I ask the hon. gentleman to consider, as Atlantic Canadian governments have considered, the danger of actually removing the Atlantic accords from Bill C-43 and leaving them absolute hostage to the Bloc Québécois.

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yes, Bill C-43 is before the House today but, as a coincidence, last year’s budget implementation bill may pass through the Senate today, a year later.

If the Prime Minister can take the tax cuts out of the budget with the snap of a finger, he can do the same thing for the Atlantic accord and save a year for Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador. Will he do that and make the same agreement on that bill?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman is wrong in his facts. In respect of Bill C-33, it was not the main budget bill from last year. The main budget bill from last year was passed through the House of Commons on May 8, I believe it was, of last year. Indeed, the hon. gentleman is wrong in the analogy that he is drawing.

* * *

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the representatives of farm producers are expressing concern at the Government of Canada’s attitude in its defence of supply management in the negotiations taking place at the WTO.

In view of the concerns of the producers over the real intentions of the government, could the minister reassure them and confirm his intention to vigorously defend the retention of supply management and order his team of negotiators to do likewise?

[English]

Hon. Andy Mitchell (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, absolutely, we support supply management in this country without reservation. That is the negotiating stance that we took in Geneva last year. That is the negotiating stance that our negotiations are taking right now. It is what we will pursue throughout the course of these negotiations.

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Mr. Speaker, farm producers are concerned because the government recently backed off somewhat by agreeing to make supply management negotiable.

Why is the government not helping farmers by closing its borders to milk byproducts legally entering Canada duty free?

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Andy Mitchell (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said in the answer to the previous question, in the broadest sense we are defending supply management through our negotiations in terms of WTO.

There are other measures in the interim that we should take. We are launching an appeal under the CITT. We are taking a look at some labelling issues and some standard issues. We put in a new monitoring system in respect of those specific items at the border. We will act as the need to act arises.

* * *

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Rona Ambrose (Edmonton—Spruce Grove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party will honour the child care agreements with the provinces; however, our party is willing to go one step further and put money directly into the hands of parents so they can make their own child care choices.

The difference between the Liberals and the Conservatives is that the Conservative Party supports equality and choice. Why is there not one red cent of the \$5 billion Liberal day care scheme going to parents who choose to stay at home with their children or choose other child care options?

Hon. Ken Dryden (Minister of Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the member opposite that the commitment that was made in last year's election campaign was not just \$5 billion over five years for a system of early learning and child care but a national early learning and child care system. It is a commitment made now and a commitment to deliver now and in the future in order to build a national early learning and child care system.

• (1455)

Ms. Rona Ambrose (Edmonton—Spruce Grove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is about equality and choice and the government is discriminating against certain parents.

Our party has spoken to parents from coast to coast. What they are asking for is a workable program that financially empowers them with choice and provides their children with the tools they need to succeed. In fact, studies have shown that almost all working parents would stay at home part time if they could afford to.

Why do the Liberals refuse to financially empower all parents equally?

Hon. Ken Dryden (Minister of Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will remind the member opposite that in last year's election campaign the commitment was a \$2,000 tax credit. That \$2,000 tax credit would have the magnificent impact of affecting those who are the worst off, those who are the poorest in the country, to the amount of \$320 per child.

The average cost of child care in the country is over \$8,000. That is a tax deduction. That is not child care.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Charles Hubbard (Miramichi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, supply management has worked very well in this country for some 40 years and our party has consistently supported supply management.

Today we find that some processors are bringing in protein additives in the processing process with cheese and other products.

How is our government dealing with this issue? How can our dairy farmers benefit from this problem that is being created by outside sources?

Hon. Andy Mitchell (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in answer to a previous question, we are vigorously defending supply management in the broadest sense to the WTO.

We are also taking some measures though that are more specific than that. We are launching an appeal under the CITT. We are taking a very close look at some labelling provisions. We are looking at the issue of standards. As we do the increased monitoring and we see the impact of these importations we will take action according to the circumstances.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Conservative amendments to the DNA bill have been unanimously accepted at the justice committee. These changes would compel dangerous offenders, like Karla Homolka, to provide a DNA sample to police.

I think the Prime Minister will find unanimous consent in the House to fast-track the entire bill through second and third reading, as the government is doing with Bill C-45, the veterans charter bill.

Will the Prime Minister also commit to fast-tracking Bill C-13, the DNA bill?

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand there has been some discussion among the justice critics and, frankly, it is an opportunity to demonstrate that this Parliament works. It worked for the veterans earlier today. It can certainly work for a number of things.

I would say to hon. members along the way that when we cooperate and focus on the interests and priorities of Canadians, Parliament can in fact work.

I would ask the two parties opposite, the Conservatives and the Bloc, that if they want to be in this Parliament and be in this Parliament for the interest of Canadians, then let us work together to ensure we can pass this DNA bill and other bills.

Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I still do not know whether that is a yes or no but why would he not do it in terms of the Atlantic accord or other bills?

Points of Order

The Minister of Justice has promised to table a bill to prohibit human trafficking. The Conservative Party supports the bill in principle. It is an initiative to stop exploitation and abuse of vulnerable people. However, without serious penalties for these serious crimes, the exploitation and abuse will continue.

Will the minister commit to instituting a mandatory prison sentence to send a clear message that human slavery is among the worst of human rights violations?

Hon. Paul Harold Macklin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Clearly, Mr. Speaker, trafficking in persons is a fundamental violation of human rights, both globally and domestically. Shortly we are going to be introducing a bill dealing with human trafficking. Once that bill has been set before the House and there has been a chance for it to be fully debated and considered at committee, I am sure that whatever resolution we need to bring forward to deal with this very difficult problem will be found.

* * *

• (1500)

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, earlier during oral question period, the leader of the government attempted to demonstrate that the 1926 example was completely different from the motion on which the House will be voting this evening. In a ruling last week, Mr. Speaker, you said the following:

—in reviewing the precedent from June 22, 1926, ...which can be found in the Journals at pages..., an amendment containing assertions clearly damaging to the government of the day was successfully moved to a motion for concurrence in the report of a special committee. I find this example to be not markedly different from the one the House is faced with now.

How can the leader of the government try to tell us this is totally different, when you, Mr. Speaker, with objectivity and after analysis, have stated that it was similar?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. leader of the government.

[*English*]

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Again, Mr. Speaker, I hope the hon. member pays very close attention. What I understood that you ruled on was actually the wording of the amendment. What I was commenting on was the actual process that was followed. The report itself had come out of committee. It was not going into committee. It was concurred in.

In fact, I would also suggest that King resigned not because of a motion in this House; he resigned because the Governor General in fact did not take his advice. He wanted to dissolve Parliament. The Governor General said no. They are two completely different examples. I want to point that out—

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Laval—Les Îles.

[*English*]

HOUSING

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister of Labour and Housing. In 1999 the government created a unique program as part of its response to the homelessness crisis in Canada. The supporting communities partnership initiative is a successful and popular program that creates a more integrated and inclusive approach to homelessness.

This program is scheduled to end in 2006, next year. Could the Minister of Labour and Housing tell this House what the government's intentions are regarding this important program?

Hon. Joe Fontana (Minister of Labour and Housing, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member for Laval—Les Îles knows, this has been an extremely successful program for over six years, with \$1.5 billion, and it is there to help people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless.

[*Translation*]

I should point out that, in the 2005 budget, the Minister of Finance indicated the government's intention to renew the current housing programs, including SCPI for Quebec.

[*English*]

The Speaker: That will conclude question period today. I want to thank all hon. members for their restraint. It is the quietest one we have had in a month and we got through a lot of questions.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Social Development is rising on a point of order.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Hon. Eleni Bakopanos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Social Development (Social Economy), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I rose and asked you to ask all hon. members to respect the limit to which freedom of speech is actually honoured in the House.

Today, two other members from the opposition party, the member for Simcoe—Grey and the member for Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, referred to the same Canadian citizen, who actually does not sit in the House and requires the protection of the House.

You, as the presiding officer of the House, Mr. Speaker, did not rule yesterday on a question of privilege that I raised and on the limits of the freedom of speech of the hon. member for Calgary—Nose Hill. If we continue to allow this type of behaviour in the House, more Canadian citizens' reputations and names will in fact be slandered.

I ask, Mr. Speaker, that you do enforce that rule and that you do ask hon. members not to mention those Canadian citizens who do not have the protection of the House. If any hon. members on the opposition side would like to defame anybody, they should do it outside and not inside the House.

Privilege

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the substance of the questions to which my hon. friend objects is simply a repetition of confessions made under sworn testimony and which is repeated and reported in the public domain. And yes, I have, as have my colleagues, been quite prepared to repeat these Liberal confessions in the public domain. What is fair comment—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Jason Kenney: Is this not interesting, Mr. Speaker? All day on the opposition side we have gone without heckling and we see what kind of reciprocation we get from the opposite side.

As for what constitutes fair comment in the public domain based on sworn testimony and Liberal confessions, we have no compunction about repeating such matters of public record here in the House of Commons, where free speech prevails.

• (1505)

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it would be useful to remind hon. members of what our rules are. Marleau and Montpetit states at page 77:

There are only two kinds of institutions in this land to which this awesome and far-reaching privilege [of freedom of speech] extends—Parliament and the legislatures on the one hand and the courts on the other. These institutions enjoy the protection of absolute privilege because of the overriding need to ensure that the truth can be told, that any questions can be asked....

Such a privilege confers grave responsibilities on those who are protected by it. By that I mean specifically the Hon. Members of this place. The consequences of its abuse can be terrible. Innocent people could be slandered with no redress available to them. Reputations could be destroyed on the basis of false rumour. All Hon. Members are conscious of the care they must exercise in availing themselves of their absolute privilege of freedom of speech. That is why there are long-standing practices and traditions observed in this House to counter the potential for abuse.

The Speaker: I indicated to the hon. member for Ahuntsic yesterday that I would get back to her on this point if necessary. I have heard additional submissions. I will get back to the House in due course in respect of these matters.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Olayuk Akesuk, Minister of the Environment of Nunavut, and the Honourable Ed Picco, Minister of Education of Nunavut.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

DIVISION LIST NO. 79

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of State (Public Health), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to state that in my excitement about returning from Nursing Week and the fabulous public health nurses in Ottawa, I ran into the House and reflexively stood up to vote. My vote of this morning should not count.

The Speaker: Is it agreed that the name of the Minister of State for Public Health be removed from the list of those who voted in this morning's vote?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of a question of privilege from the hon. member for York West.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a question of personal privilege. Members will recall that on January 14, 2005, I resigned as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration after serious allegations were made against me relating to Harjit Singh and his immigration situation.

At the time these allegations were made, I had decided to step down as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration in order to clear my name. On January 31, 2005, I commenced legal action against Harjit Singh and others as a result of false and outrageous statements made against me.

Today I am pleased to say that all legal proceedings between Harjit Singh and I and others have been settled. As part of the settlement, I received a full and complete retraction from Harjit Singh and public apologies from all of the defendants.

I now wish to read Harjit Singh's public apology and retraction into the record. It states:

"I, Harjit Singh, wish to provide a full and complete apology and retraction to Judy Sgro for statements made by me or attributed to me by the media in connection with my immigration situation. I now admit that I did not have a meeting with Judy Sgro. Further, at no time did Judy Sgro request any campaign assistance from me, nor did she help me with my immigration problem.

I am providing this apology and retraction voluntarily and of my own free will, having been provided with independent legal advice. I would like to say that I sincerely regret any statements that may in any way have tarnished Judy Sgro's privileges as a Member of the House of Commons, and further sincerely regret any embarrassment or pain caused to Judy Sgro by my statements, which were completely false".

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

• (1510)

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for York West has the floor.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Mr. Speaker, the apology and retraction by Mr. Singh continues: "I am aware and consent to the fact that this apology and retraction may be released to the media for publication. I ask that my privacy and that of my family be respected. I will not be making any further comments to the media regarding this matter". It is signed before a witness by Harjit Singh.

Mr. Speaker, the allegations and the personal attacks made against my integrity and my reputation as an individual were very difficult for my family and I, as they would be for anyone in the House. I am grateful to everyone who supported me during these difficult times. I very much appreciate the support of my constituents in my riding of York West and my colleagues in the House of Commons.

This situation should serve as a reminder to all that before we pass judgment on the alleged conduct of individuals, we should first have all the facts. Reputations should not be tarnished by unsubstantiated allegations and innuendo solely for partisan politics.

All of us as hon. members in the House should use caution to ensure that we do not abuse the immunity that the House provides. This honourable institution should never be used to propagate smear campaigns and personal attacks against anyone regardless of what side of the House one is on.

I also wish to report to the House that after an extensive investigation by the Ethics Commissioner, he has concluded that I acted appropriately in the situation involving Ms. Balaican. The Ethics Commissioner's report fully supports what I have said from the very beginning, which is that I acted appropriately and did not breach any ethical guidelines, that I had never met with Ms. Balaican, nor was I ever aware that she had volunteered on my campaign.

He stated that my decision to grant the minister's permit was based on reasons entirely consistent with the criteria that I had been using as a minister in determining all other requests seeking my intervention.

Once again, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the many people across Canada who provided me with support and well wishes. Most important, I want to thank our Prime Minister, one, for accepting my decision to step down, and two, for his unwavering support both politically and personally.

Mr. Speaker, I respectfully ask for unanimous consent to table the public retraction and apologies from Singh and the other defendant, as well as the report from Dr. Bernard Shapiro, our Ethics Commissioner.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and all of my colleagues.

•(1515)

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for York West have the unanimous consent of the House to table the documents she referred to?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of another question of privilege from the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

FRANKING PRIVILEGES

Mr. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege concerning abuse of the frank.

The member for London North Centre has been sending bulk mailings into my riding under his frank. A number of constituents have contacted me with concerns about these mailings and in particular have asked why they are getting mail from another member.

These bulk mailings are nothing other than 10 percenters or householders under a different name. Using the frank to deliver 10 percenters and householders in enclosed addressed mail is a

Privilege

violation of the spirit of what the frank is for and a violation of the spirit of the rules concerning 10 percenters and householders.

However it is the nature of the enclosure in these bulk mailings that concerns me most and is, I believe, a violation of my parliamentary privilege.

It is stated in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*:

Parliamentary privilege is the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively...and by Members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions—

As the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, anything that impedes my ability to discharge my function is a violation of privilege.

The enclosure in these bulk mailings impedes my ability to be the member for Wellington—Halton Hills because they mislead the reader into thinking that the member of Parliament for Wellington—Halton Hills is someone other than me.

I know that the envelope contains the riding and name of the member for London North Centre; however, many people do not take note of exactly what appears on the envelope when they open an envelope and look for what is contained therein. When one reads the enclosure, one concludes that the member for London North Centre is the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. This is causing a lot of confusion with my constituents as to who is their MP. I suggest that this constitutes a prima facie violation of my privilege.

If you find, Mr. Speaker, that I have a prima facie case, I would be prepared to move the proper motion.

•(1520)

FRANKING PRIVILEGES—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: As the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills well knows, we have had a number of these kinds of questions of privilege raised in the House recently and quite a number have been sent off to the procedure and House affairs committee, which is actively studying these issues, I believe, as we speak.

I am more than happy to permit him to move his motion and send the matter to committee, if he wishes. I am sure the committee will be interested in considering this one along with all the other ones that it is currently dealing with of a similar nature. There do seem to be a lot of these mailings these days.

I know that the committee is actively considering the issue. I just heard a little about it from one of the members who has one of his matters before the committee.

If the hon. member has a motion to make, I will be glad to hear it.

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly am not using my frank for bulk mailings into someone else's riding. I move:

That the matter of privilege raised by the member for Wellington—Halton Hills on Tuesday, May 10, 2005 be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Debate, the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River.

Privilege

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know colleagues do not want to spend the whole afternoon debating this issue, but I want to make two remarks.

First, I intend to support the motion, not because I believe it is, as has been put, a clear-cut case of breach of privilege but it certainly falls within the category of difficulties that the procedure and House affairs committee is looking at now.

Mr. Speaker, I would not want your ruling to be taken as a ruling that a franked envelope communication from a member of Parliament to a person in another riding would constitute a breach of privilege of the member in the other riding where the letter was sent. Members of the House of Commons routinely send out communications to Canadians either in reply to letters or for other purposes.

In terms of free speech and our franking privilege, I just wanted to make it clear that members have to continue to be free to communicate with Canadians on issues, especially when Canadians write to individual MPs who are not their members of Parliament.

The second point I want to make is that the rules that govern both mailings, whether it is under the frank or whether it is a 10 percenter or whether it is distribution of householders or the bulk mailing machinery that allows us to send communications by weight, I regard the rules now as an absolute wild west show. I do not regard the rules as being in keeping with the way these privileges and services developed originally.

When I first came to this place, there was a rule that mailings of that nature did not include partisan material. Eventually that rule sort of fell by the wayside. It was honoured more in the breach, which is a very unfortunate thing to say. The rule was not followed so we abandoned the rule because we could not police it. Then, not only did we have the partisan material going out routinely as part of any of those types of mailings but we started to add in negative political material. It would not just be promotional of one's own party; it would actually be negative about another party, or another MP, or a minister.

Now all kinds of communications are going out under different categories of parliamentary services, paid for by the taxpayer, which is loaded with political self-promotion and negative political content about other members and other parties. I do not believe the citizen would be able to keep track of it all. I am afraid to even inquire into it. It is a wild west show. None of us is actually in a position, singly, to grab hold of this, but I am hopeful that the procedure and House affairs committee will signal the problem and commence on developing a resolution.

Ultimately, it is not the procedure and House affairs committee as much as it is the Board of Internal Economy that will have to deal with these rules. Of course that particular body, the Board of Internal Economy, operates in camera and its minutes are not public. Nobody knows—I do not even know—how his or her representative or how the representatives of their colleagues in the House are dealing with this issue on the Board of Internal Economy. That is just not the way to run a democratic institution, especially when we are dealing with on one hand, members' privileges and services, and on the other, our democracy, which relies on fair free speech, as was pointed out

earlier today, and communications between this place, its members and our electors.

I make those remarks in trying to be helpful. I regret if my inability to immediately unanimously agree to the motion has prolonged debate here, but I hope my remarks will be taken as helpful.

● (1525)

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of my colleague across the way on this issue. I had not anticipated participating in this debate. I thought your remarks, Mr. Speaker, summed up the situation as it has been presented over the past number of days in the House. Members of Parliament from all parties raised the issue of 10 percenters and franked mail going into neighbouring ridings.

My colleague from the Liberal Party raises these issues and says that we want to ensure we do not have a situation where partisan mailings go in. As we pointed out in the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs as we deal with these one by one when they get to committee, which I sit on, the reality is that this has been happening for quite some time.

Another reality is that all parties do it. An additional reality is that one of the few tools open to the opposition parties to offset the tens of millions of taxpayers' dollars that are spent every year advertising the supposed good works of the Government of Canada into all of our ridings is for us to offset that in a small way by either direct mail or 10 percenters, and getting communication pieces into Liberal held ridings.

The member can stand and try to narrow the debate down to the use of 10 percenters or franked letters. I agree with him that we cannot have a situation where it would be illegal for me as a member of Parliament to respond to a Canadian citizen who writes me a letter by sending a franked response. I must have that right. If a citizen from the hon. member's riding writes me a letter, I must be able to respond. Otherwise, obviously I would be accused of ignoring the concerns that he or she wrote to me about. We are in complete agreement on that.

We have information that the Liberals are using virtually pallets full of negative partisan material that they are franking into ridings. I suggest that the hon. member communicate his concerns not only to this side of the House but among his own colleagues as well.

The government uses millions and millions of dollars to advertise what the government does. I think every Canadian is well aware of who the Government of Canada is at the moment. It is the Liberal Party of Canada. Certainly, they have become more aware of it because of the sponsorship scandal. What is the sponsorship scandal all about? It is about advertising.

We have an interesting situation. The government is caught in a scandal of monumental proportions that came about because it spent millions upon millions of dollar advertising. In this particular case it was advertising Canada in Quebec trying to buy Quebec votes. To get the truth out to Canadians, the opposition from time to time must send a counter, so to speak. We must send out our views to Canadians to get the message out unfiltered.

We certainly cannot rely on the government to do that for us. It has a pretty partisan agenda of sending out its message and costing millions of taxpayers' dollars to get its message out about all the supposedly great and wonderful things it is doing for Canadians. We have very few resources to get our side of the story out. I would like everyone to bear those remarks in mind.

The last point I want to make is that quite frankly twice during my hon. Liberal colleague's remarks he said that the use of franked mailings for political self-promotional items and 10 percenters was, in his words, "a wild west show".

● (1530)

I notice that he did not say a wild east show. He did not say a wild central Canadian show. As a western member of Parliament, I take exception to that because once again, it is a Liberal trying to denigrate western Canada by this being a plot of the west and that is not the situation. All four political parties use these communications pieces and I just wanted that on the record.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on the subject matter and support my colleague from the Conservative Party in getting this to committee because I was one of the members who originally brought this to the House of Commons. There was an organized campaign of several members of the Conservative Party who made mailings into my riding to gather data on the signature or request of the official opposition leader.

I would hope that they would be consistent in their objections of this practice, especially when it comes to two things and if it is about the content. It was interesting because the clerk of the House of Commons testified in our case in public before the committee and said that the material that the Conservative Party sent into my riding could not be done procedurally in the House of Commons.

The issue that we had was not only just mailings into my riding, but material that was saying we could do something that is impossible for us as members to do. We were not only attacking a particular member, but also misleading the public about the role of a member of Parliament.

I would hope that my Conservative colleagues would be very supportive of my case because it is wrong to use the frank or the mailing issues in that way. It is not even about putting a slant on something, a political spin or an evaluation of legislation. We are talking about whether members can do something or not do something.

I had several Conservative members mail a piece of legislation related to the RCMP and the gun registry on the very day that this country was mourning the loss of our four officers. People in my constituency were picking it up in their mailboxes. This was very improper as it related to the whole issue of the gun registry, the RCMP, and how it affects individual members of Parliament.

That day my wife pulled that piece of literature out of the mail. It had been sent to the wrong area. We need to have corrective action for all members in the House. If we are going to use a resource of the House to at least provide our commentary on issues and our positions on issues, that is one thing, but we are actually using public resources to tell Canadians things that we cannot even do as members of Parliament and we harm our democracy.

Privilege

I support the member and I would hope that his party is going to be consistent on this. I would hope that his party is going to recognize that this damage is not only to a particular member of Parliament but it damages Canadian democracy when we literally spin things as opposed to talking about the truths of members.

● (1535)

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to unnecessarily prolong this, but I did want to raise the issue that the New Democrats raise. All parties utilize this access to Canadians for partisan communications. It is not just the Conservative Party.

Has he checked with his party to ensure that everything that it has mailed out is completely factual? I asked him that question when he appeared on his own point of privilege on this issue. I asked him that in the procedure and House affairs committee and he did not reply. I do not think he knew the answer, to be completely honest, but I did ask him the question.

If he is going to point the finger at other parties then has he at least checked with the 18 colleagues in his caucus to ensure that everything that they have mailed out to other members' ridings, whether they be Liberal, Bloc or Conservative, has been completely factual? He did not reply.

I would agree with him that it is something that the House needs to look at. It certainly will be. At present there is the point of privilege that he himself raised that went to procedure and House affairs that we have dealt with now. In addition, there is one there now from the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country. There is also one from a Liberal member that cited a point of privilege and now another one from my colleague from Ontario.

It is a growing problem. I certainly recognize, on behalf of the Conservative Party of Canada, that we are not just pointing fingers. I said that during my remarks. We are not just pointing fingers at the other three parties. We are recognizing that it is something that must be dealt with.

● (1540)

Hon. Tony Ianno (Minister of State (Families and Caregivers), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been dealing with this issue for 12 years. There has not been a member from the NDP who has not sent something into my riding, and I think they have had three or four mailings since we have been here. They continue to send things into my riding, and to my family and myself. I face the same thing with that member.

I have been against this issue for a long time. It is important for members of Parliament to have freedom of speech and to write to someone. I have no problem with that. However, when it is a mass mailing into another member's riding for partisan political purposes, then they should pay for it from their party's coffers as compared to paying for it out of the Canadian public's coffers.

Privilege

It is just coincidental that the leader of the NDP's wife happened to run against me, and more mailings from him continue to come into my riding. I am sure he is aware that his wife did not win the election in my riding. He can continue sending anything he wants into his riding, but people in my riding would like to hear from their own member of Parliament. When the information becomes partisan, it is often not factual.

It is important that we deal with this from a House perspective, so that we take a legitimate approach versus a partisan cheap shot approach.

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member made a very relevant point that basically reinforced what I said and what his own Liberal colleagues said earlier. This is not something unique to one party. We cannot point fingers because all of us are utilizing this. Obviously, there is a problem otherwise the Speaker would not be ruling *prima facie* questions of privilege and sending these issues to procedure and House affairs. It is something that not only that committee needs to study in some depth but as my colleagues have said, it is something that the House itself should be seized with and see if there is not something we can do.

As I have pointed out, there is a slippery slope here from the position of the three opposition parties. In my mind we are already at a disadvantage. I want to be totally fair here. In this case, it is not only the federal Liberal government but provincial governments all across the land.

In the 12 years that I have been a member of Parliament I have seen millions of dollars wasted. Governments, whether provincial or federal, argue that the responsibility rests with the government to communicate to its citizens what programs are available. This is what they are doing. That again is a slippery slope between making average Canadians aware of what is available to them, what the government is doing to put programs in place that they can access, and going beyond that which is self-promotion of the government and by extension, their political party.

Governments use millions of taxpayers' dollars to tell Canadians how wonderful they are and very little resources are left for opposition parties to combat what a government said and get out their side of their story. That is the issue I was trying to raise.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, this may not be a precise point of order, but my colleagues have all made a number of worthy points and there is consensus on all sides of the House that this issue needs to be addressed. I personally share that view. There are examples everywhere of how we can improve it.

There seems to be an agreement to send the question of privilege without a vote to the procedure and House affairs committee. That is probably the best place to sort this out. I would urge you, Mr. Speaker, to seek the consent of the House to have the question put, send it to committee, and then we can do the work that is necessary on this issue.

The Deputy Speaker: If that is the will of the House we can certainly do that. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Windsor West.

● (1545)

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I want to comment on the testimony that was applied. This is about an individual member. The member from Wellington—Halton Hills has brought forth a very serious issue as a member of Parliament. It does not have to be brought into partisanship, as the chief opposition whip is trying to do. This is about their own member having been infringed upon in bringing something before the Speaker.

For people to understand this, a member can bring forth a question of privilege to the Speaker of the House. That is what I did a number of weeks ago. All the other issues that people are talking about, that somebody mailed this or somebody mailed that, there is always this avenue. That is the avenue I chose to bring mine to committee. It is important to understand that is a remedy.

I have had materials from the Liberals and Conservatives. Since 2002, I have been inundated by all kinds of material. What also is important is we do not lose focus on the content which misleads the public to think something else. There have to be remedies for members of Parliament.

I would hope members of the Conservative Party of Canada, seeing as they orchestrated a campaign in my riding, would take responsibility for the content for which they are asking taxpayers to pay.

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, I take great exception to some of the things that have happened with 10 percenters as well. I have had my riding inundated with 10 percenters from other provinces, small islands for instance. However, I want to address something the member for Windsor West said.

He said that the Conservatives orchestrated an attack or a mailing in his riding. The House of Commons postal unit testified at our committee that it was its mistake. It was not the Conservative MP's mistake at all. The House of Commons postal unit said, "We made the mistake. It was our fault. We do not even know where they went". The unit could not say to what ridings the 10 percenters went or who got them. It could not say how to reach back and correct that. Therefore, today we passed a motion in the committee for the House of Commons to issue an apology to the communities involved with this. I think that was the proper way to deal with it.

It was not an act by a Conservative member of Parliament that caused this problem. It was a mistake by the postal unit of the House of Commons and it testified to that. The unit has apologized, but it could not say where they went. I do believe it has to be tightened up. For sure the post office has to be able to record where they went in the event that something like this happens again.

I agree with the member. If it happened in my riding, I would want redress too. I would want somebody to apologize for it. I would want the people responsible to apologize. The House of Commons postal unit has done that at our committee. We will ask it to put out a press release to that effect. However, it was not a mistake on behalf of the Conservative member that this mailing went into the member's riding, or not. I wanted to correct the record on that.

Government Orders

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, that is correct. It was a postal error.

It was an orchestrated campaign against the member for Windsor—Tecumseh. Several members of the Conservative Party used their franking privileges, or their House of Commons stamps, to allow for that. Several different individuals collectively sent the same piece that asked for a response to the leader of the official opposition. Then there is the other issue of the actual content. I hope my colleague, who has raised the question of privilege today, will discuss with his colleagues how to remedy those situations.

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand there is a great deal of debate as to who is sending what material where. While people are complaining about franking privileges, the leader of the NDP has sent stuff into not only my riding but to others with the NDP clearly indicated on it. These are partisan materials.

I have never put my logo on my stuff. My understanding is that what we send from Parliament is supposed to be informing our constituents, not to be partisan literature. I would like to suggest that all members adhere to the rules instead of sending partisan literature not only to their own ridings but into neighbouring ridings.

• (1550)

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE THE MINISTER OF FINANCE TO MAKE CERTAIN PAYMENTS

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-48, an act to authorize the Minister of Finance to make certain payments, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I begin my comments on this spending blitz bill, I want to make reference to a very important and historic accomplishment this past weekend.

Those members of the House who are familiar with the sport of basketball will have noted a Canadian, Steve Nash, received the award of the most valuable player in the National Basketball Association. It should be acknowledged in this place the tremendous dedication that Mr. Nash has shown, not only to his sport but to his country, his humble and hard-working approach to the game of basketball and his triumph over adversity that typifies the Canadian spirit.

I know every member of the House and every Canadian shares in the accomplishments of Mr. Nash. We look forward to watching his

future success, not just of course in the NBA, but on the international stage as he leads Canada on to a medal in the next Olympic Games.

Now back to the debacle, which is Bill C-48. The bill stands in sharp contrast frankly to Mr. Nash, who has never tried to take credit for something he has not done. The bill is indicative of the government's haphazard approach to money management. It is a departure from what could have been a legacy for the Prime Minister.

The Liberal Party keeps promoting the Prime Minister as a man with fiscal prudence in his heart. What the bill indicates is more desperation than fiscal prudence. This unholy alliance between socialism and corruption is a subset of the government's spending spree.

In the last three weeks alone the Liberals have committed to spending over \$1.24 billion of new money per day by my calculation. It is not their money to spend. This is Canadian taxpayer money. It shows a complete back to the future approach to money management. It is a complete departure from the spending approach to which the Prime Minister claims he adheres.

Frankly, I think it is eating the Prime Minister's legacy alive. It is showing the desperation the government has in its heart and it is showing to what it will sink. In an effort to buy support to divert attention away from a vote buying scandal, the Liberals are engaging in another vote buying scandal. This disrespects not only the intelligence of the Canadian people, but it disrespects the fiscal responsibilities that the government should be demonstrating.

There is an old adage that says it is better to do what is right, not what is easy. It is very easy for a government to commit to spending more money in the hopes of buying popularity at the polls, but that is not what is right.

What we need here is an approach that demonstrates clear thinking and better planning. The New Democratic Party joined with the Conservative Party in supporting an initiative that our finance critic, the member for Medicine Hat, promoted and we supported. We thought the New Democratic Party supported it as well.

The initiative called upon the government to be more accurate in its fiscal forecasting. It also called upon the government to set up a mechanism whereby each of the other parties could bring in experts to evaluate the government's numbers, and produce what we call Parliament's numbers.

The New Democratic Party supported that initiative, basically on the assumption that it would help to get a better handle on the government's projected surpluses. Before the last election, we know the government projected a \$1.9 billion surplus. Ultimately the reality was the surplus was \$9.1 billion. Canadians were deprived of a debate about how that money should have been spent, or should have been applied to the debt or should have been allocated to lower taxes.

The NDP appeared to be concerned about that accuracy or lack of accuracy in supporting our quest for Parliament to have more accurate numbers.

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However, that quickly went by the wayside when the NDP had a chance to encourage the government to continue to spend money. The NDP members sold their souls for a few billion dollars of additional spending commitments by a government that has not kept its commitments. It has not kept its promises. It has a legacy of making promises and breaking promises. They showed how easy they were when they sold out for that.

The bill is one and a half pages of broad general statements about how the government will spend money, but there are no specifics to it.

• (1555)

What has that given us in the past? Commitments to spend more money on aboriginal housing. How did that help the people of Davis Inlet? There are no ideas coming forward about how to spend money more intelligently and how to money to effect better results. Simply put, the government is making the same mistakes that put us into the debt position we are in as a country today. Back to the future.

The Conservative Party offers a striking alternative to what the NDP and the Liberals offer. We want a plan and we developed a plan. The difference that we see between the coalition and the Conservative Party is that we are not interested in throwing money at problems and we are not interested in adhering to the false belief that it will somehow solve those problems. We understand it takes a plan. It takes a commitment. It takes belief that intelligent spending will move toward positive results.

The government on the other hand believes that if it engages in conspicuous spending, somehow that demonstrates that it cares. However, it demonstrates that it cares about itself more than any caring for the Canadian taxpayer and the Canadian people.

Liberals have abandoned their fiscal framework. The bill will not be supported by members of our caucus. It simply allows for a further slush fund to be established and used and abused, with no strings attached, by the cabinet of the Liberal government. That is vote buying of \$1 billion a day. The Liberal government says that we should not support an election because it will cost one quarter of a billion dollars. That is one-fifth as much as the government is committing in additional spending every day.

Liberals make the case with their promises that there needs to be an election and that they need to be kicked out of office.

Hon. Joe Fontana (Minister of Labour and Housing, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate the member's philosophical difference as to how Conservatives may differ from the government's position with regard to the budget. However, I think he will want to be factual. This is the eighth consecutive surplus budget that the government and the Prime Minister as finance minister and now Prime Minister have put forward. Three minutes after we presented the budget, the member's leader supported it. He said that it was a good budget, as did his finance critic.

What has changed since then other than the fact that perhaps the Conservative Party caucus sees a political opportunity because of what is going on in another place on TV. Perhaps all of a sudden it thinks and feels that the budget is no longer important to the people of the country, but the commission report is. That is why the

conservatives have changed their tune and their support for the budget.

In actual fact, Bill C-48 and the new arrangements that have been put in place with the NDP relate very much to the spending that Canadians support, and they have already spoken on the issue, and that is \$1.6 billion in housing. It was in our five year principal framework. We have managed to move it ahead.

There is an additional \$1 billion for the environment. Is the Conservative Party now saying that it does not support the housing, or the environment, or post-secondary education or additional aid to foreign governments? What has changed other than within the five year framework there will continue to be a surplus. We are paying down debt. We have reduced taxes. Of the billions that the member is talking about spending, I want to clarify that we cannot spend money that we do not have appropriated through the House. These are existing programs that have been in place since the last budget. Therefore, we are spending money on housing. The money we are spending was in the last budget, which was approved by the House.

I am sure the member would want to clarify the record and not suggest that we are trying to buy votes again. We have a mandate that was given to us by Canadians last June to govern and that is what we are precisely doing: child care, cities and communities, housing, the environment and seniors supplements. Maybe he would want to clarify that for Canadians.

• (1600)

Mr. Brian Pallister: Mr. Speaker, I would relish the opportunity to clarify with respect to some of the remarks that he has made.

He made the comment that the leader of the Conservative Party said that he was supportive of the budget. We did not vote for the budget. The NDP voted against it.

I think we should make the point here that if the budget is as good as the member says it is, then why does it now require changing? Why does it require an additional commitment of over \$22 billion by the government in addition to the budget commitments made earlier? The government is laying out additional spending every single day. It is not interested in running on the budget.

For the member's edification, I will read from an article. I have many to choose from but I will start with an article in today's *Globe and Mail* entitled "Liberal Spending Blitz". Toronto-Dominion Bank chief economist Don Drummond said:

Because we've had almost as many spending announcements since the budget [as] were...in the budget, it would seem to be almost incumbent on the government to produce an update where we are fiscally.

The government is not interested in running on the budget. It is interested in spending enough money so it can be popular with every basic category of special interest group it can find in the country.

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This is a one and a half page bill. The member asked how we can be opposed to spending money in each of these broad categories. We are not. We are opposed to spending money willy-nilly without a plan. A one and a half page document, such as Bill C-48 is, outlines no constructive use for the money. It simply allows for a slush fund for cabinet to dip into. In a variety of scenarios they may or may not spend money under various headings. There is nothing in the bill about a plan to use this money intelligently.

What Canadians want is for the government to operate transparently and with some sense of accountability. That has not been evident with the government for a long time.

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am certainly pleased to speak to Bill C-48. Since the last speaker quoted from the *Globe and Mail*, I think it is only fair that I quote from the *National Post*.

One headline reads "Spending spree continues", and another reads, "Ottawa doling out \$1.24 billion per day". It states:

The money being doled out works out to \$1.24-billion a day, including \$5.75-billion the Liberals gave to Ontario.... Other provinces are now salivating over the prospects of inking their own version of the Ontario deal....

It is hard to fathom what is going on and how fast the Liberals are spending money. I love the name of the bill. Bill C-48 is an act to authorize the Minister of Finance to make certain payments. I do not know how it can be restricted to certain because it is almost any payment. They will do anything right now to buy votes. The *National Post* has it up to 122 different grants and programs, totalling \$22 billion in three weeks to buy votes.

I want to point out to citizens that Bill C-48 is an act to put the deal on paper that the NDP made with the Liberals. The projected cost is \$4.6 billion, that is \$4.6 thousand million so the Liberals can buy a few months and get through the vote on the budget. The NDP votes are now worth \$240 million each to get the Liberals through the budget. If that is good management, common sense and good administration I will eat my shirt.

I can just imagine how the bureaucrats in the Department of Finance must be operating. They must have whiplash. No, we do not have tax cuts. Yes, we have tax cuts. No, we do not have tax cuts. How do they keep up with what is going on? We are spending \$1 billion here and \$100 million there and \$22 billion here. I do not know how the people in the Department of Finance can operate. It must be incredible.

The one thing for sure is that if the Liberals can open a drawer and find \$4.6 billion to pay for the 19 votes that the NDP gave them, there is too much money in the drawer. That is simple evidence that we are being overtaxed. If they can, with the snap of a finger, find \$4.6 billion, something is wrong with the system. The something wrong is that we are overtaxed.

We as members of Parliament have to fight for infrastructure in our ridings to save our institutions, like the Nappan experimental farm which has been in Nappan, Nova Scotia since before Confederation. At a time when farmers need all the help they can get in research and development, new products, training, all kinds of things, the government announces in the budget that it is going to close the Nappan experimental farm. It has unique soils, terrains and

products. Now it is talking about closing the Nappan experimental farm because it does not have the money but then it turns around and pays \$4.6 billion to buy the 19 votes of the NDP. It is absolutely incredible and makes our job of convincing people more difficult.

Even a little thing like a light bulb in a lighthouse in Wallace Harbour, a lighthouse that saves lives, we had to fight to get the light bulb changed in the lighthouse of all things. However when the Liberals need the 19 NDP votes they do not seem to have a problem finding \$4.6 billion in the drawer. When we needed a few thousand dollars for a light bulb for a lighthouse to save lives, it was not available. We had to fight to get it and we did get it, I am very pleased to say.

The Atlantic accord is another issue that should be dealt with. The Atlantic accord is a very important deal for Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador. The government will not pull it out of Bill C-43 and make it a separate deal. It will do it for tax cuts but not for Atlantic Canada. It is holding Atlantic Canada hostage because it wants to force all kinds of things down the throats of Atlantic Canadians to force them to agree to these things and only then will it agree to the Atlantic accord.

• (1605)

Last year's budget implementation act is going through the Senate today, a year late. I believe it was tabled on March 23, 2004, and it is only going through the Senate today.

This is the same bill where the Atlantic accord is stuck now. It is on pages 57 and 58 of Bill C-43 instead of being a stand alone bill that we could pass in the House to allow Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador to move forward. We cannot do that because the Liberals want to hold us hostage and make sure they ram all these other things through without us even considering them.

We cannot do that. It is our job to hold the government accountable. It is our job to ask questions about all these other things, like the foundations that are funded under this program, student loans, employment insurance, income tax. However the government says that we are not allowed to ask questions on those issues. It says that we should just close our eyes, grit our teeth and say yes to the budget so we can have the Atlantic accord. It is not fair and we cannot do it.

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The cost of the election is something that comes up from the Liberal side. The Liberals say that they cannot afford an election. They say that it might cost \$230 million to \$250 million to run an election. With each NDP vote costing \$240 million, I do not see how they can say \$230 million is too much to charge for an election. Two hundred and thirty million dollars for an election is a lot of money but every NDP vote that they bought cost \$240 million, which is more than a whole federal election.

If we are a little upset about Bill C-48, those are some of the reasons.

I wish that the Liberals would bring in the things that we have asked for, and specifically on the Atlantic accord, to pull it out of the bill. The Minister of Finance says that we cannot cherry-pick Bill C-43, that we cannot pull out what we want. However they can pull it out if they need to. They can pull the tax cuts out to satisfy the NDP and then create a whole independent stand alone bill, which is exactly what we have been asking them to do for the Atlantic accord. They can do it for themselves and the NDP but they will not do it for Atlantic Canada.

I hope they will reconsider that and pull the Atlantic accord out of Bill C-43, make it a stand alone bill and we commit to passing it in one day.

• (1610)

Hon. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hate to do this but my colleague's colleague, the Conservative member who spoke previously, I really enjoyed the first part of his speech, which was about Steve Nash. I wondered if the colleague would care to comment on that because the member from Manitoba described his great achievements.

I did make the point off the record that Steve Nash is only 6'3" or 6'4" and that he is the third smallest person ever to win the most valuable player award in the NBA.

I would like to ask my colleague, first, how tall he is compared with his colleague here, and second, does he think there is hope for someone like me becoming the most valuable player in the National Basketball League?

The Deputy Speaker: I am interested to see how the member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley is going to make this all reference back to the issue we are debating here this afternoon.

Mr. Bill Casey: Mr. Speaker, first, let me make it clear that unless there are petitioners there is no hope at all for the member.

I also compliment Mr. Nash on his accomplishments. As an old car salesman, I feel some affinity for Mr. Nash, who is only 6'1" tall by the way. Be that as it may, he is a little shorter than the member was saying, which is something like the Liberals are doing with their budget, only it is far short of what we need and what this country needs.

There is no hope for the member and there is no hope for the budget.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member here on our side of the House.

The headline in the *Toronto Star* reads, "PM's spending spree smacks of desperation". The member made some very good points in terms of the kind of spending that has gone on. I would like the member to elaborate on a quote from today's *Toronto Star* which reads:

—the image is of a federal government creating new problems as it tries to buy its way out of trouble. And that, too, is reality.

That is a very serious statement. I would like the member to elaborate on that because it is causing new problems here in Canada.

Mr. Bill Casey: Mr. Speaker, this budget is not going to cause as much trouble for us as it will for generations down the road, because a lot of these items are locked in. These are operational programs that the government is announcing. They are locked in and they will carry on for a very long time. If at the end of the day we have a deficit this year, and I do not know how we can avoid it with the rate at which the government is spending now, then we will pay, our children will pay and our grandchildren will pay for a very long time.

This comes down to common sense. No responsible Minister of Finance and no responsible Prime Minister would say on Saturday night, "Okay, we will give you 6,000 million dollars, and okay, we'll give the NDP 4.6 thousand million dollars for the 19 votes to get us through the next couple of months". It is incredibly irresponsible. It lacks all common sense and responsibility.

Hon. Joe Fontana (Minister of Labour and Housing, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the member how much I respect him and his hard work, but let me try to deal with some issues that I need to bring to his attention.

First, I wonder if the member would compare the Conservative record of Mr. Mulroney from 1984 to 1993, during which there were probably eight or ten consecutive deficit budgets, as high as \$42 billion each and every year, with the Prime Minister's budgets. From 1997 to 2005 we have had eight consecutive surplus budgets.

Second, I am sure that the member has done so much on foreign aid. I appreciate his work in the Middle East. This money is not to buy NDP votes. Part of this money is to go to people. It is to go to people for foreign aid, housing and the environment. We are talking about putting the money in for people. I wonder if he would address the foreign aid issue, because I know he has been very passionate about this.

• (1615)

Mr. Bill Casey: Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for the hon. minister too. However, having said that, let me note that he said this money is not to buy the NDP's votes. Why was it not in Bill C-43? Why did it only crop up in Bill C-48 when the government needed the 19 votes so it could get its budget passed? Two weeks ago, it was not there. It is there now just because the Liberals need to buy NDP votes.

As for the Conservative record, that is a good point. I wish we had had more success than we did when we were in power, but there is not an expert or an economist in the country who does not give the credit for balancing the budget to the establishment of the GST and free trade. I challenge the minister to stand up and tell us about one innovative or imaginative policy, such as the GST or free trade, that the Liberals came up with and that helped them balance the budget. They balanced the budget on the backs of Brian Mulroney's accomplishments.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, Canadian Heritage; the hon. member for Langley, Human Resources.

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, I am very happy to be here today to speak about Bill C-48.

This bill enables us to work with Canadians to enhance their quality of life by encouraging the development of a highly skilled workforce and an efficient labour market.

[English]

That in essence captures what we are trying to achieve in partnership with the provinces and territories and with key stakeholders across the country. It underscores our commitment to make the government work to build a strong economy so the benefits of citizenship in our great country touch every community, every family and every Canadian.

[Translation]

This new bill completes the budget implementation act and reflects the priorities of Canadians.

The emphasis on post-secondary education is a perfect example. Bill C-48 will enable us not only to maintain our excellent post-secondary education system but also to strengthen it in order to increase the learning opportunities for all Canadians. Learning is and will continue to be a priority for our government.

The importance accorded learning in this bill will help to create the conditions needed to ensure constant economic growth and enhance the prosperity of our country. It also shows our collective determination to ensure that all Canadians can contribute to the prosperity of the Canada of tomorrow.

[English]

Before outlining some of the main points in Bill C-48, let me first remind my hon. colleagues that it is another stone laid on the foundation of good governance. While other countries find themselves slipping back into deficits, we have delivered another balanced budget.

[Translation]

This is, in fact, the ninth consecutive balanced budget.

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[English]

Thanks to consecutive budget surpluses, Canada boasts a solid credit rating and low interest and inflation rates. Among the G-7 countries, Canada has posted the strongest job growth in recent years.

[Translation]

The number of employed Canadians has risen continuously over the last 10 years. At present, the labour force participation rate is reaching unparalleled heights at 67.4%.

We are also very proud to note that, for a second time, the unemployment rate is at its lowest point in Canadian history. Our country's economic success enables us to invest in areas of crucial importance to Canadians, such as education and training.

Since skills and knowledge are the foundation for productivity, innovation and growth, we can be proud of the fact that, of all the countries in the world, Canada has the highest post-secondary education enrolment rate. The international studies that have been done, especially the Program for International Student Assessment, show that the literacy and numeracy skills of young Canadians compare favourably with those of young people in other countries.

Canada's education ministers have every reason to be proud of the quality of the instruction provided in our facilities. The successes that I just mentioned are a testament to the solid foundations that we have already built and are the fruit of all the investments made in learning and innovation over more than a decade.

•(1620)

[English]

As impressive as these facts and figures may be, there is no room for complacency. The reality is that not all Canadians share equality in this prosperity, nor are they currently able to fully seize opportunities in the 21st century knowledge economy.

In spite of Canada's high rates of post-secondary education attainment, there is still a significant pool of Canadian workers with low skill levels.

[Translation]

Some eight million working-age Canadians lack the literacy, numeracy and other skills needed to carve out a place in an increasingly demanding labour market. Illiteracy has a direct impact. It is estimated that a 1% increase in the level of literacy and numeracy would result in a 1.5% increase in GDP per inhabitant. Such an increase in productivity would translate into huge social and economic benefits for Canada.

Government Orders

Among Canadians, it is the older workers, aboriginals and new arrivals who face the most obstacles in getting employment. They have a considerably higher than average rate of unemployment even though we increasingly depend on them to fill the gaps left by the retiring baby boomers. When individuals have difficulties, society suffers. A good number of us are already hearing employers in our ridings say that they have difficulty meeting their human resources needs.

There is no general shortage in Canada, but there are difficulties in some regions, in certain trades and in the health and safety sectors. It is not just a question of finding workers. They have to have the necessary skills to meet the criteria of today's jobs, which are based on information and technology.

Given the demographic trends and the pressure from global competitiveness, we must focus on the quality of the labour force and set aside quantitative factors if we are to sustain economic growth. That means updating the skills of our current workforce and increasing learning opportunities for marginalized Canadians. Bill C-48 underscores the commitment of the Government of Canada to do so.

[English]

A progressive government works toward the common good. Bill C-48 creates a new avenue to increase access to education and training, which is central to participation in today's workplace and society at large and to the long term success of our country's economy.

[Translation]

Since we recognize that low-income earners and marginalized groups run a greater risk of exclusion, Bill C-48 sets priorities, including improved access to post-secondary education for students from low-income families.

These priorities build on changes to the Canada student loans program. As a government, we have a solid basis on which we can build, including the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation and the Canada education savings grant.

In addition, one of our priorities is to multiply skills development and learning opportunities for aboriginals. I want to thank my colleague, the hon. member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, for her hard work in this field. To reach our goal, we have implemented the aboriginal human resources development agreements and the aboriginal skills improvement program.

My department's role is to help close the employment gap by ensuring that aboriginals have the skills they need to prepare for, find and keep sustainable employment now and in the future.

• (1625)

[English]

At this time, we have two labour market program initiatives that are helping to significantly improve employment outcomes for aboriginal people: the aboriginal human resources development strategy and the aboriginal skills and employment partnerships program.

[Translation]

The aboriginal human resources development strategy shares many of these goals and objectives. It is designed to assist all aboriginals prepare for, find and keep employment.

The signatories to these agreements have created and are administering programs to increase the level of skills and learning, and participation in the labour market and Canadian society overall.

[English]

I should mention that my colleague the Minister of State and I have been impressed with the degree of support that the development strategy has received from aboriginal groups.

Aboriginal groups have publicly endorsed and praised the program for its recognition of the diversity of aboriginal Canadians, described by the Métis National Council at the Canada aboriginal round table as the "crown jewel in federal programming", and by the national chief of the Assembly of First Nations as the federal government's "best kept secret".

The program has a solid base to build upon. We have a labour market that is different than it was when it was first established in 1999, with new challenges and new opportunities. The new framework that I am proposing will take our aboriginal policies and programming into this labour market.

For its part, the aboriginal skills and employment partnerships program, a very new initiative, is proving to be an important means of contributing to aboriginal employment and supporting economic development projects near or within many aboriginal communities. To date, it is expected to support up to 11 projects, resulting in some 7,000 aboriginal people receiving training and more than an estimated 3,000 people obtaining employment.

I want to point out that investing in these areas is consistent with the advice being offered at the provincial level, where several recent studies have examined the challenges of post-secondary education. I want to further underline that any funds allocated to these areas must support national policy objectives in the area of post-secondary education and training.

[Translation]

I would like to remind hon. members that, in addition to the points I have raised today, our government has also invested \$125 million in the Workplace Skills Strategy, in order to make a closer connection between learning and work.

To that end, we are going to beef up Canadian training programs, support the implementation of new demand-driven skills development initiatives for people who are already employed, encourage dialogue on workplace skills-related issues through workplace partnerships comprised of business administrators, union leaders and trainer representatives.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Understanding that strong learning, literacy and essential skills are crucial in assisting workers adapt to changes in their workplaces and communities, the Government of Canada is investing \$30 million in the national literacy secretariat. We are working cooperatively with provincial and territorial governments, employers, labour groups, communities, aboriginal people and voluntary organizations to improve the literacy and essential skills of Canadians.

[Translation]

We recently also invested \$25 million in the Training Centre Infrastructure Fund.

These funds will be allocated to a three-year pilot project which will address the need for training centres to purchase up-to-date equipment and machinery. This will help tradespersons adapt to constantly changing skills requirements.

These major investments will not only help Canadians to achieve their full potential, they will also be beneficial to the economy and to society as a whole. This is one of the most dynamic periods we have ever experienced, a time when human creativity is bringing about major changes in the way our economy and our societies function.

● (1630)

[English]

Part of this means working within the global economy to ensure we are competitive with labour markets around the world. I am pleased that we were able to announce the internationally trained workers initiative on April 25. We have delivered on our Speech from the Throne commitment to improve the integration of immigrants and internationally trained Canadians into our workforce.

[Translation]

We have also announced a major investment of \$85 million to facilitate foreign credential assessment and recognition.

What lies behind the changes is the need for experienced and qualified workers, in all professions and all sectors.

In order to enhance productivity we need to create more opportunities for people to acquire the knowledge and skills required for success in the economy of the 21st century. We also need to provide workers with the necessary tools to develop their skills or learn new ones in response to the changing economy.

And perhaps above all, we need to preserve our values of shared responsibility and our commitment to equality, which are what set us apart as a society.

[English]

I believe the points I have highlighted today reflect the kinds of investments Canadians value and the kind of society they want.

[Translation]

As we roll out our strategy for investing in people, we will be building a Canada in which citizens can acquire the skills they need to build their own futures, a country where corporations set the

example by being innovative, a Canada where all members of the communities have an opportunity to reach their potential.

I am convinced that my hon. friends will agree, regardless of the party to which they belong, on the need for and the benefits of the initiatives proposed here and that they will support them.

Just one year ago, Canadians elected a minority government. In so doing, they clearly told us that they wanted the parties to work together for the good of all Canadians. Bill C-48 is a tangible example of this cooperation, a compromise reached in order to do something positive for our fellow Canadians.

I ask my hon. friends in this House to look very closely at Bill C-48, especially clause 2(1) (b). In the English version it says: "for supporting training programs and enhancing access to post-secondary education, to benefit, among others, aboriginal Canadians, an amount not exceeding \$1.5 billion". I do not know a single member elected to this House who would not be in favour of this clause.

[English]

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be quick because I know my good friend from Prince George has an important question.

The minister who spoke is very much aware of what is taking place in our tourist business in Banff and Jasper regarding small business. Small business is spending thousands of dollars every year to advertise across Canada to get Canadians to take jobs. These Canadians do not particularly want these kinds of jobs because they are seasonal and in many cases it is not a place they can look forward to building a future. So we rely on overseas employment to come here annually.

I would like to know why, in this particular year, the minister and her office made it so miserably tough on small businesses by requiring far more than they have ever required before? These businesses supply housing, food, transportation and above minimum wage pay. Now they are required to fly them here, fly them back, and all kinds of additional requirements that these small businesses in these tourist areas can no longer afford to do.

Why does the minister and the government constantly hinder small businesses that are trying to thrive in these huge tourist communities and why do they cause these impediments? Why do they not strengthen small business through some efforts rather than cause them such grief?

Government Orders

•(1635)

[Translation]

Hon. Lucienne Robillard: Mr. Speaker, my fellow member raises the question of our foreign workers program. It is crystal clear that the rules of this program have not changed. First and foremost, our employers must make an effort to find Canadians, not only in their own communities but across the country.

As I was saying, even though the unemployment rate has greatly diminished in Canada, there are still Canadians who are looking for work and are ready to work in the tourism industry anywhere in the country.

There must be an effort, therefore, to attract Canadians to these jobs. Once employers demonstrate that they have made the necessary effort, we have to give permission to bring in foreign workers. When we bring in foreign workers in sectors where the work is more casual, we must ensure that these people have working conditions equal to those that would apply if Canadians were hired.

Every year foreign workers come to Canada to work in small business, tourism and even agriculture. In the summer, many foreign workers are hired all across the country to pick fruit and vegetables. We must ensure, however, that we have a good system for welcoming them and adequate working conditions.

These requirements have not changed over the years because, in my view, they are very much in keeping with the values of Canadians.

[English]

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased with Bill C-48. It is something that I worked hard on in order to have more funding for post-secondary education and training. It was a commitment I made in my riding where post-secondary education is something of key importance to the people there.

I am glad that the bill we are debating today has an extra \$1.5 billion for post-secondary education and training. It is something that was absolutely absent from the first budget proposal from the Liberals. In fact, the only measure for students was if the student happened to die, there might be some debt relief on a student loan. This is a significant improvement to what was originally introduced.

I have a question for the minister about training programs. She spent a great deal of time this afternoon speaking about that and the importance of having a skilled and trained workforce in Canada. I have heard from representatives in the building trades that now it is often difficult to ensure that highly skilled Canadian workers get the jobs in Canada. We have seen her department approve applications from employers for temporary workers from overseas based solely on the idea that the workers from overseas would be cheaper. In fact, in some of the paperwork it boldly states that the workers would be cheaper.

I wonder what the minister is prepared to do to ensure that skilled Canadian workers get the jobs that are available in Canada and that workers are able to travel to those jobs in other parts of the country.

[Translation]

Hon. Lucienne Robillard: Mr. Speaker, first let me say that, while I appreciate the NDP's budget suggestions, I still want to correct my colleague's remarks at the start of his speech to the effect that it was thanks to his party that we will be investing in post-secondary education, which according to him, we had not done before.

This is taking the short-term view of our budget. A comprehensive look at the measures we have provided over the years for our students in this country reveals spending of over \$4.7 billion on post-secondary education, either through direct assistance to students, through transfers to the provinces for teaching, through bursaries or through the bill we adopted most recently in this House on education savings. There was a lot of money.

We owe it to ourselves to do this because it is vital to our future here in Canada. People must have a good basic education.

Now, let us return once again to the program for older workers. In connection with what our employers have requested there are two different opinions. The Conservative Party says we are too demanding, the New Democratic party says we are not demanding enough. Let me tell you that the Liberals are somewhere between the two. We are balanced. We ensure, first and foremost, that jobs go to Canadians. However, when the jobs are given to foreign workers, it must be in complete security. We have to look at the health of these people and their working and living conditions. It is clear, however, that priority must go first and foremost to Canadians. That is the context in which we are working.

•(1640)

[English]

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister talks about the Liberal way. I will tell her what the Liberal way is. The Liberal way is to drag one's feet on something until it gets to a crisis point and then do a little something.

When I came here in 1994, we advised the government that there would be a severe tradeskills crisis in this country. The baby boomers were going to be retiring and there was no adequate apprenticeship program underway in the country. We told the government that it had better address it as quickly as it could because it could become a crisis. The Liberals have done nothing for 12 years and now the crisis is even worse.

What the minister is proposing is just a minute amount of the work that the whole apprenticeship program needs to ensure that we are not going to be simply without electricians, plumbers, pipefitters, carpenters and other tradesmen because the Liberal's apprenticeship program has been a disaster. She knows it and she has nothing to be proud of when she is talking about this new program. Fix the old one first.

Government Orders

Hon. Lucienne Robillard: Mr. Speaker, if the member really believes in what he said right now, he has to explain why he does not vote for the budget. Why did he say a few weeks ago that it was a good budget? Why are opposition members changing their minds suddenly? They tell me that this is for the public interest. Never. This is for their own interest because there is personal ambition in all these people. We know that.

However, we are elected to serve Canadians first. If the member really wants to serve Canadians, he should vote with us on the budget that includes the increase in the post-secondary education program.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order respecting proceedings pursuant to Standing Order 66(2)(b). There are three debates to be resumed in the next few days under that rule. Motion No. 5 will be on May 11, Motion No. 7 will be on May 13, and Motion No. 8 will be on May 16.

* * *

AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE THE MINISTER OF FINANCE TO MAKE CERTAIN PAYMENTS

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-48, an act to authorize the Minister of Finance to make certain payments, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Hon. Joe Fontana (Minister of Labour and Housing, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, talking about height, the member is absolutely right. There is a chance for some small guys, maybe not in basketball but hopefully in politics. I have been here 16 years and I have enjoyed the company of some of my best friends, even on the other side of the House.

Before I begin my speech, I want to pick up on something the member for Cumberland—Colchester talked about being the highlight of the Conservative record between 1984 and 1993, that being the GST, which we all know how well that went over, and the free trade agreement. We all know it was the federal Liberal government that fixed those things.

Bill C-48 and the budget gives the government the opportunity to talk a bit about where it wants to spend taxpayer money. A budget is a lot more than just a piece of paper or a balancing act. One needs to put it into context first and foremost.

In 1993, 12 short years ago, this country was on the brink of bankruptcy. Interest rates were 14% and 18% and unemployment was high. Since 1997 the Liberal government has produced surplus budgets each and every year. This is the eighth surplus budget. The facts are on the table.

We have reduced taxes by \$100 billion, especially to low and middle income Canadians. We have created more jobs than any country in the G-7, over 2.5 million jobs in the past number of years. Canada is ranked number one in the G-7. We have the lowest interest rates which have allowed people to build or buy homes. That is a fact.

Every single year that this government has put people first the country has done well. This budget does that again. It puts people first, which is what it is all about.

Bill C-48 will deliver another surplus budget but this is after having paid down the debt, after having reduced taxes and after having an economy that is the envy of the world with record growth and a number one quality of life.

Let us talk about where we should be investing people's money because that is what this comes down to. Where does the government want to put its money? Where does that party want to put its money?

I want to talk a bit about something I am very passionate about. I cannot believe that the Bloc critic would object to this budget with respect to housing because he was a cooperative housing president and knows how much housing speaks to his people. He wants to vote against this budget, especially the \$1.6 billion for housing. Why? It is because his party wants to destroy this country, nothing more than that. It is the personal ambition of the Bloc leader.

I am really surprised because I know a lot of those members across the way, friends of mine over there, including the housing critic for the Conservative Party who has spoken about the Conservative Party supporting housing. What are those members going to do? They are going to vote against this budget. Why? It is because of personal ambition. It has nothing to do with governing. It has nothing to do with waiting for the commissioner to make a report. Those members think there is an opportunity here but Canadians are much smarter.

Canadians have said that they like the new budget and they like where the government is going to put their money. The Conservative Party is not listening to the people of Canada.

Let me talk a bit about housing because it affects every one of our communities. Eighty per cent of the people who live in this country has the option of buying a home but 16%, or 1.7 million, Canadians are looking for housing opportunities and there are very few.

● (1645)

What has this government done for housing over the past number of years? We have invested \$1 billion in the homelessness initiative. We continue to invest \$2 billion each and every year on social housing and co-operative housing. We have invested \$1 billion since 2001 to build affordable housing across this country. This budget speaks about investing another \$1.6 billion in every community. Why? It is because we believe we need to house Canadians.

I believe housing is the foundation of individual dignity. Everyone in this country needs an address. Without an address, without a home, without a place where a person can feel comfortable, secure, where no one can ever take it away, where the kids can go to bed at night not in crowded conditions, not in unsafe homes, not in insecure homes but in homes where they can sleep so they can learn tomorrow morning.

The men and women who are the working poor and who go to work each and every day fear that 30 days from now they may be out of a job or they may lose their house because they are paying 50%, 60%, 70% and 80% of their income toward housing.

Government Orders

Does housing matter to people? It does. Does it matter to the Liberal Party and to this government? Yes, it does. It is the foundation of families and communities. It is the foundation upon which neighbourhoods, cities and towns, rural and urban across this country from coast to coast to coast, are built, which is what the budget speaks to.

This budget speaks to housing, which is good economic policy, good social policy, good health policy, good environmental policy and good people policy. What we are talking about is investing in young people so they can buy their first home.

We want to invest in aboriginal housing because we all know how important it is to invest in our aboriginal Canadians on reserve and off reserve. They not only want to own and operate, they want to be part of the solution. They want aboriginal housing for themselves.

In the next couple of weeks cabinet will be having a retreat with the aboriginal leaders of this country to build an aboriginal housing system that will work for them and with them to ensure we deliver on the housing that they require.

We all know that over the past number of months since I became the minister of housing we have had an opportunity of working with each province. The province of Quebec, which is at the forefront of ensuring social housing, affordable housing and co-ops are there, has taken all the money we put on the table back in 2001 and 2003.

British Columbia has also made housing the number one priority. Larry Campbell, the mayor of Vancouver; Mayor Gérard Tremblay in Montreal; mayors and city councils across the country have made housing their number one issue. Why? It is because it is important for their families and for their communities. They have implored and asked the Conservative Party and the Bloc members to support this budget, to stop playing politics and to invest in people and housing. That is what we were sent here to do seven short months ago.

I know my friends will ask what has changed. Three minutes after we presented the budget the Leader of the Opposition said that it was a great budget and that his party would support it. What has changed since that day? Not very much has changed.

Mr. Richard Harris: You have an NDP budget now.

Hon. Joe Fontana: No, we did not change anything. It is because the opposition wanted to play politics and rescind its support that we obviously had some willing partners.

What is wrong with a political party that has embraced some of the things that we were going to do within our five year fiscal framework, which was the environment, housing, foreign aid and support for post-secondary education? What is wrong with supporting what the people of Canada want us to do? The NDP has put forward priorities in conjunction with us.

I know the Conservatives want to support this budget because they did one short month ago. Why not now? It is because the Conservatives want to play politics with this issue and with the budget.

The Conservatives think there is a political advantage in going to the polls and forcing Canadians to spend \$300 million since the last election. It is not going over. Canadians are not believing it.

Canadians do not want a party that is prepared to dismantle this country.

• (1650)

The federal government should not be an ATM machine to the provinces. This is a country greater than 10 provinces and 3 territories and when we are talking about housing, it is a national housing program. It is about education and training for all the children who will be our future workforce. It is about good health care and good child care. It is about supporting our seniors and our disabled in terms of housing and guaranteed income supplements. It is about a child care system that will give people an opportunity. We are talking about the people's business and about what matters.

Members on the other side have spoken to me about housing projects in their individual cities and towns. I want to be able to say yes to every one of them because I think we need to build houses for the 1.7 million people who are looking for an opportunity and a chance in life. If we were to do that then we would be sure not to fail them in any way. Housing is at the centre of it all.

All hon. members should just think about what our homes meant to us when we were growing up. Is it not conceivable that a budget should be able to give most Canadians what each of us have enjoyed: a place of security, a place that is our own; a place of dignity and respect? That is what family values are all about, what communities are all about and what building cities and communities is all about. The government has delivered big time over the past number of years.

The member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley said that the government was on a spending spree. I have made announcements about waiving premiums for the not for profit sector and the co-ops, fixing section 95, making it possible for new home buyers to pay less in premiums and making it possible to reinvest some of CMHC's surplus in ways that Canadians can afford and aspire to home ownership.

We signed agreements with Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, B. C., Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick just last week, and every province, every community, every not for profit organization, the private sector and the big unions, everyone in that partnership want to build homes for people.

I implore my colleagues on the other side that there will be a time and a place to have an election. The Prime Minister already gave that commitment to Canadians. Let us do the people's business. Let us work on the things that are important, such as housing, the environment, seniors, the disabled, child care, health care, equalization and the Atlantic accord.

The Liberal government has always spoken for every one of the regions, every part of our country and every person, regardless of where they are on the income scale. Why? It is because it matters. We have demonstrated around the world, in housing and in labour, that Canada really does believe in its citizens and that is what we are doing. We are building the greatest country on the face of this world.

• (1655)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Bill C-48.

Government Orders

It is important to recognize that we have had a significant change in policy here because of what happened all within a matter of weeks. We were waiting for the Conservatives and the Bloc to bring down the government without a budget or decide whether they may or may not do so but we New Democrats did not wait to see what might happen.

Quite frankly, the Conservatives did not vote in the last budget and we did not want to sit around and wait for them to decide with the Bloc to bring down the government. That could have happened. We could have had a situation where we would be back in a vacuum. That is why we want to see the budget move really quickly through the House of Commons.

We have been very much at the forefront of the housing element and in calling for a program that would bring Canada more in line with other nations. In my area of Windsor, Ontario, there is a great housing need that has been pent up from the lack of action. This is the first time we will see something in modern times.

I would ask the minister to comment in terms of southern Ontario on what type of impact we expect to have on housing and how soon we can actually expect the projects to be unveiled. I know we are looking at a two year window of a commitment to move the projects along. I would ask him to see that the proper policies are in place so that we will not be delayed. People need housing right now, not just the homeless but also working Canadians. Working Canadians cannot find employment with sustainable incomes. I ask the minister how quickly we can expect to see some real results.

• (1700)

Hon. Joe Fontana: Mr. Speaker, let me indicate that for every province we are ready and set to deliver the additional funds they might want once this budget passes. There are no impediments to delivering a renewal of the homelessness initiative through SCPI or the residential rehabilitation assistance program, RRAP, where seniors and people who want to stay in their own homes but are looking forward to renovating them can access the money as quickly as possible. There is a new affordable housing initiative, where in fact we will work with the provinces.

There are no impediments. In fact, the day this budget is passed and the moment that dollars can start to flow, we will work in every province, especially the province of Quebec because it is at the forefront. B.C. has already moved. Ontario is ready. Nova Scotia is ready and set to go. A number of provinces are ready. Let us not forget that this is 100% federal money. There is no cost sharing required from the provinces.

I will tell everyone here, and I hope everyone in turn will tell their communities, to start bringing forward projects to their municipalities. There is a pent-up demand and we will be able to deliver incredible numbers within two years. There will be thousands of units and we will be helping thousands and thousands of households. That is what the people of Canada have sent us here to do.

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during his presentation the Minister of Labour asked why we did not continue to vote for the budget. The answer to that is very clear. It is a different from the budget we supported the first time. We now have an NDP budget.

I want to talk about the seeming hypocrisy of the government when it talks about the heart it has for families. This government has done everything it can to discourage the strong foundation of families, more than I have ever seen over the last 12 years. It has not recognized that the best direction for children in this country is in fact their parents.

By establishing a discriminating tax regime, it has made taxes easier on a two income family than a one income family. It has a tax regime which penalizes families that make the choice of sacrificing to have one parent earning money so the other can stay home and look after the children. The government has not fixed that, despite the pleas from my party.

When it comes to the child care program, the NDP members said earlier that they and the government want to give choices on child care. Let me tell the House what their choices are: that a family can take the kids to one state run child care institution or over to another state run child care institution. They do not have the choice under this program to receive monetary assistance to make a choice as to whether one parent will stay home to look after the kids or to take them to a child care facility of their choice.

This child care program forces Canadian parents, if they want to benefit from the program, into no other option than to put their kids in a state run child care institution run by a big bloated bureaucracy. That is not having a heart for families.

Hon. Joe Fontana: Mr. Speaker, what I want to point out to the hon. member is this. If people were renewing their mortgages in 1993 under a Conservative government and are now renewing their mortgages under the Liberal government in 2005, we have probably put \$4,000 to \$5,000 in their pockets after taxes. Why? Because that is what we have been doing. We have had the lowest interest rates in the past 20 or 30 years.

More housing is being built this year. Why? Because of our small business and economic programs. In the past year, 250,000 homes were built and 450,000 homes were sold. Why? Because the economy is doing well.

I know that those members do not want to hear the good news, but Canada is on the move. I know they are a bunch of fearmongers, but the fact is that the country is doing well. There will continue to be tax cuts for small business, and there will be granny flats, secondary suites and more income for seniors. That is how we are going to help families: more income in terms of affordable housing. That is what we are going to do. That is why this budget is a people budget and that is why those members cannot stand it.

All you want to do is talk about big tax cuts to big corporations as opposed to speaking or thinking about the people of Canada, regardless of their income.

• (1705)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): I will remind the hon. minister that his comments are to be made through the Chair.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Christian Simard (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Labour and Housing reminds me of a bad preacher. The kind who says, if you ask me today to prove that God exists, I will, and if you ask me tomorrow to prove that God does not exist, I will do that too. This is exactly what he has done. On February 24, in answer to my questions, he said that there were sufficient funds for housing without needing to set aside additional amounts in the budget, and that things were perfect as they were.

Suddenly, for purely electoral reasons, this minister is making yet another new election promise. The problem is that he no longer has any credibility. Currently, CMHC has a \$3.4 billion surplus. Could the minister not have used this money over the past year to help the homeless, who are urgently calling for investments? But no, instead, he is resorting to a little blackmail to win an election by telling the people that if they vote for him, and the bogus agreement with the NDP, he will get them this money. This is disgraceful.

The Minister of Labour and Housing went to Montreal, to the Old Brewery Mission, to make the same announcement three times in the past year and a half. I am not the one saying this: this comes from Pierre Gaudreau, from the organization, RAPSIM, for Montreal's homeless. He said that the homeless were being treated like roads. This is cynical and underhanded.

So, old investments are being announced, while all the homeless groups know that, in March 2006, it will all be gone and even if there were a budget, it is too late for planning. Services to the homeless will be interrupted because of cynicism and this minister's bad salesmanship. He is trying to use bright lights and lots of noise to prove that he is interested in housing.

I am challenging him right now to take the CMHC surplus, to help the homeless and to not use blackmail in this election.

[English]

Hon. Joe Fontana: Mr. Speaker, if I am a poor preacher then you are a Judas to the housing cause—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): Order, please. I will remind the minister to make his comments through the Chair, please.

Hon. Joe Fontana: Mr. Speaker, I was suggesting to the member that if he could call me a poor preacher then I could call him a Judas to the housing cause, because as a member and a leader in Quebec on cooperative housing, I have indicated over the past seven months that we have introduced a number of different instruments, a number of different programs, that have helped people across the country, especially in Quebec, including using some of the surpluses of the CMHC.

What does the Bloc say about housing? Absolutely nothing. In fact, when I was in his leader's constituency I had a homeless person plead with me that we do more for the homeless people in Quebec, in Montreal and in the riding of his leader.

I implore the member to support the people of Quebec, the homeless, and the people who want to buy homes, to support the people, including Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain, FRAPRU, which wants us to build more social housing in Quebec.

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I found the speech by my colleague across the way very interesting. Frankly, I find it just astonishing that the government members are actually justifying this budgetary process, this ad hoc budgetary process that has been put together. We have the budget introduced on February 23, full of all of their priorities, and we have the budgetary implementation bill, Bill C-43.

I would remind members of this House, because now they are criticizing the Conservative Party for not being a responsible opposition, that on the initial budget we abstained as a caucus because we felt that we should allow the budget to go through and then review the items item by item. In fact, even on Bill C-43 we had agreed that the budget implementation bill should go to committee. We asked that the CEPA amendments be removed. Our understanding was that the government was going to remove the CEPA amendments and allow it to go to committee and we would deal with it there.

There, hopefully, we would have taken on things like the Atlantic accord and we would have been able to implement them right away. On issues or items where we disagree, we could have disagreed. That is the way a responsible opposition party works.

What happened is that then the Prime Minister got together with the leader of the NDP, and now here we have the budget bill, here we have Bill C-43 and here we have \$4.6 billion in spending on two sheets of paper. That is \$4.6 billion in spending, with the finance minister completely reversing his earlier position, something unprecedented in the history of this country. It is so unprecedented that I would like to quote the finance minister's warning back to him. This is from the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*. The finance minister himself stated:

You can't go on stripping away piece by piece by piece of the budget...

You can't, after the fact, begin to cherry pick: "We'll throw that out and we'll put that in, we'll stir this around and mix it all up again". That's not the way you maintain a coherent fiscal framework.

If you engage in that exercise, it is an absolute, sure formula for the creation of a deficit.

The finance minister and the Prime Minister did exactly what the finance minister said he was not going to do on this. Somehow the Liberal members are standing up and justifying this in the face of what their own finance minister said. The fact is that the finance minister, after this embarrassment of a budgetary process, should have to step down.

I would also caution the NDP members, because they signed this agreement. The leader of the NDP signed this agreement with the Prime Minister. Today our leader asked about the corporate tax cuts that are supposed to be removed. I would like to ask the members of the NDP to watch very carefully the responses from the finance minister and the Prime Minister about how "in the future" they are going to be removed.

Government Orders

I would also like the NDP members to be sure about any of these supposed spending increases they have asked for in this coalition. I do not think they are going to get them, because the finance minister has put in a hedge that it will not fall below a certain number before these spending increases take effect. Frankly, the NDP should talk to the members of the Liberal Party and talk to the finance minister and get it on paper, because I do not think that commitment is worth what it is written on.

Beyond the whole ad hoc process here, here is what this has done. Frankly, as finance minister, the Prime Minister, and I will even admit this, actually had somewhat of a reputation in the business community as someone who seemed to be a prudent fiscal planner. He had two year rolling projections.

An hon. member: Look at his record.

Mr. James Rajotte: What has he done? Frankly, he has demolished his own reputation with the business communities, small and large, across this country. He is committing to spending five to ten years down the road when he used to commit to two year budgetary projections. He is signing deals at midnight in his office, going from premier to premier across the country. It is just an ad hoc budgetary process that is frankly embarrassing.

I want to touch upon two reasons in particular why we should oppose this budget. First, this new budget does nothing whatsoever to address our competitiveness, our productivity gap with the United States and other emerging nations like Brazil, India and China. It does nothing to help our companies or our industries. Second, it does nothing to address what Don Drummond pointed out in his report months ago, which was the fact that the disposable income of average Canadians has not gone up over a 15 year period.

These two very serious things need to be addressed. I will address the competitiveness issue first. The Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters, the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and small businesses have all talked about the need to improve our competitiveness.

• (1710)

What could the government have done to do that? It could have done things in terms of addressing capital depreciation rates. I thought the government was going to do that. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance knows that the Liberals did not do this in this budget.

The capital depreciation rates are 20 years in Canada and they are eight years in the United States. It is a very abstract thing, but it allows companies to write off their equipment faster. It makes companies more efficient and more productive so that they are better able to compete in a global economy. Also, it allows them to turn over their equipment at a quicker pace which is better for the environment, which should fulfill the goal of this nation in terms of being more environmentally friendly. That is one thing the Liberals could have done.

The second is to actually implement the capital tax reductions. I see members across gawping at this. This has actually been suggested and recommended by finance committee report after finance committee report, apparently agreed to by Liberals and Conservatives alike. This should have been done a long time ago.

Instead it is delayed and the ad hoc deal is done with the leader of the NDP.

We have waited years for the government to act on its own External Advisory Committee on Smart Regulation so industries such as the auto industry can actually compete on an international level across the border. They need this type of regulatory change, regulatory harmonization to ensure that they can compete as well as they do.

There are issues such as the infrastructure challenges. Look at how many billions of dollars of trade go across the Windsor border each year. Government members keep saying they are addressing that. The Liberals have been in power since 1993. The back-up is still as bad, in fact it is even worse than it ever was. Members such as the member for Windsor West and the member from Essex have brought this up. This should have been addressed in this budget. Infrastructure needs should have been addressed. In fact it is not being addressed in the budget and the members across the way know that.

Let me address the issue of disposable income. I want to quote the Toronto-Dominion report that was done by Don Drummond whom members of the House know. He is a very well-respected economist. He worked for the finance department under the Prime Minister when he was the finance minister. He found that for the past 15 years average Canadians received little or no increase in their take home pay.

On page 2 of his report he said, "The inflation adjusted GDP after tax incomes on a per worker basis real GDP per worker rose by 22% while real after tax incomes per worker squeaked out a cumulative 3.6% gain over the entire 15 year period. That is completely unacceptable and needs to be addressed".

Members across the way may not understand this but average Canadians work very hard and pour their life energy into their work. The fact is that 15 years later, the Liberal government having been in office since 1993, the average take home pay of teachers and nurses and so on has not increased, and the government stands proudly and does not think that is a shame. It is a shame that for average people in this country their take home pay has not increased in 15 years. The government should admit that and take steps to address it. It should start to reduce its surpluses and actually leave more money in people's hands.

The other issue that needs to be addressed is the whole issue of actually creating jobs and creating wealth. Government members love to talk about redistributing wealth because it is all they can do. They do not actually reward the people who, through their risk and entrepreneurship, actually create jobs in this country.

Government Orders

A C.D. Howe Institute report found that corporate taxes were actually destructive to the long term growth of Canada and that productivity needed to be addressed. We can read the headlines, in fact productivity between us and our major trading partners has increased. Recently I met with members of the forestry sector. They talked about the nations that stepped ahead of us in terms of the competitiveness index. They are all Nordic nations: Iceland, Switzerland, Norway and Ireland. They have stepped ahead of us because they have invested in human capital prudently but they have also reduced their tax rates. They have also realized that it does not pay in the long term to punish those who create the jobs, who create the wealth. The wealth has to be created in the first place if it is going to be redistributed.

The fact is that individuals and businesses alike have suffered under the government's inability to address these major economic issues such as high personal and corporate income tax rates. Individuals and corporations have been struggling under the Liberal government.

● (1715)

I want to look again at personal income tax rates of average Canadians. Again I want to refer to the Don Drummond report which I encourage members opposite to actually read. He says:

The tax burden on individuals must also be reduced. The top marginal federal-provincial personal income tax rate is over 45% which is nearly equivalent to sending half of a worker's income to the government, not to mention that it kicks in at relatively modest income levels—

At this point I want to make the point that one of the problems in Canada is that our marginal tax rates kick in at a level that is much too low. We tax Canadians at a level that is too low. The marginal tax rates should be pushed up so that lower or middle income Canadians who are struggling to make a living have the ability to improve their own lives and improve the lives of their families before they have a bigger tax clawback.

I want to further quote from Don Drummond's report:

And, more modest income levels get hit with a combination of taxes and clawbacks in benefit payments that can raise the effective marginal tax rate to 80%. It simply does not create sufficient incentives to work, save and invest.

That is very well said. The fact is we need to reduce personal income taxes. We would hope that the government would actually do that. Canadians should be able to put something away, for instance pay \$5,000, pay the tax up front in a prepaid tax plan, put it away and let it grow into a nest egg for them.

Hon. Joe Fontana: That sounds like George Bush's plan.

Mr. James Rajotte: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Labour is being ridiculous right now. The suggestion is that average Canadians could take \$5,000 of their own money, pay the tax up front, put that away in a nest egg on a year to year basis and allow it to grow so that they could actually have it when they retired. He compares that to the George Bush plan. In fact it is a Conservative plan that allows Canadians to provide for their own retirements. The plans that the Liberals have are not sufficient enough to provide for people's retirements when they do retire.

There is also something they could actually make changes on. With respect to the changes the Liberals proposed to the RRSP, people tell me that the biggest problem is that the Liberals may have

made it more flexible and that is great, but people need more flexibility so they can have money at the end of the year to put away. They want their tax burdens lowered so they can actually put the money into a plan.

Let us also look at investment tax credit regimes. One of the biggest problems facing this country is that we invest in companies through R and D. Here I will be fair and credit the former industry minister, John Manley. He showed a lot of leadership with things such as the Canada Foundation for Innovation, the Canada research chairs and investments through the research councils. I will give credit where credit is due. However, one of the big challenges that companies face is they rely on this R and D and they get to a certain level. One example is Iogen Corporation here in Ottawa. Then they have a period where they need access to capital in order to grow to where they can become a fair sized manufacturer or whatever. They need that access to capital.

The government has proposed certain things, technology partnerships Canada and other programs. We are hearing from company after company that this is not the way to do it. Companies such as Ballard in British Columbia would like flow-through shares. They have proposed it so that the investor would be allowed to write off that loss, direct money into companies such as Ballard, so that we do not have an American company coming up here and saying, "Ballard has this wonderful technology. The Canadian government has invested money in R and D. We are going to scoop it up and take it down to the United States".

Iogen right here in the city of Ottawa is producing ethanol. It is an excellent plant. It is concerned about moving to Iowa because it has become productive and is at the point where it needs access to a sufficient amount of capital so it can stay here in Canada, and that is not happening. We need to look at the whole issue of commercialization and look at allowing these companies to access a big amount of capital, which is not available through a program like technology partnerships Canada. It just does not work that way.

I would also like the government to look seriously at our venture capital policies. The reality is we need not only to increase the size of venture capital in Canada but also to increase the managerial expertise at seeing these young start-up companies that do need venture capital and ensuring that it gets to them, so that the money gets to the companies that need it.

● (1720)

What has really gone out the window as well with this budget plan is any sort of debt repayment plan. We would think the government would actually come forward with an updated fiscal statement for the next two years to five years as to what the budget is rolling out. The government has made so many announcements over the past few months I think it has actually lost track of the amount of money that it has promised. What we are asking is that it present an updated fiscal plan. A lot of the outside economists, whether it is the C.D. Howe Institute or people like Don Drummond, have said it is incumbent upon the government to do that.

Government Orders

I would like to talk about the whole Kyoto process. There was \$5 billion allocated in the budget. Then the Minister of the Environment three weeks later, or even later than that said, “Oops, sorry, I was off by \$5 billion” and said he thought they would have to put in \$10 billion. The government has allocated about \$2 billion to Kyoto and emissions have actually gone up. Here is \$2 billion to increase emissions so the Liberals are going to spend \$10 billion and hopefully decrease emissions.

The reality is there are ways to reduce emissions of all types, the CO₂, SO₂ and NO₂ emissions, that can be done by investing in technology, by allowing companies to invest in technology. One way would be to reduce the capital cost allowance as was recommended by the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters. This should be done on a broad based level. The member said it was done in the budget. It was not done in the budget. It was done only for a certain number of specific cases. It was not done on a broad based level as was suggested by the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters. This would allow companies to invest in the new technology that we desperately need.

What this comes down to in the budget is a different vision. It is a different vision of Canada. It is one which says we cannot just allocate endless spending without knowing where it is going. We have to have a prudent fiscal approach to the way we treat taxpayer dollars. I think the difference comes down to that.

It is interesting in question period to hear the government respond to questions. It is always, “Our money is going here. Our money is going there”. It is not the government's money. The fact is it is taxpayers' money. It is taxpayers' money that is held in trust to be spent on the priorities that they want it spent on. That is one thing the Liberals and NDP members will never understand. It is taxpayers' money that should be held in trust to be spent on their priorities.

With the size of the surpluses we have had, it is time to give individual Canadians, average Canadians, a substantive tax break so that they can keep some of the life energy that they pour into their work. It is time to allow them to keep some of their own money for their own priorities, for their own families and their own needs.

● (1725)

Hon. Tony Ianno (Minister of State (Families and Caregivers), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting to listen to the member who forgets a lot of the facts about his party. When we first took government in 1993 there was 11.4% unemployment and the interest rates were extremely high. In the last 12 years there have been three million new jobs. Twenty-five per cent more Canadians are working today than 12 years ago. It is because of good fiscal policy.

What one finds is that 85% of all new jobs are from SMEs, the small business sector. The government has instituted many policies to ensure that the small business community, the entrepreneurs of Canada, use their creative juices to put Canadians back to work. That is the reason we have been able to have the eight consecutive budgets. We have bypassed two American recessions even though we continue to supply many of our goods and services to them, because our entrepreneurs have become extremely efficient. With our fiscal policies, with the opportunities through the EDC and many other tools, they have been able to expand the horizons for all Canadians across the country and around the world.

It is very interesting that the member does not understand that this budget is a people budget. It ensures that all Canadians can have the standard of living that we all want for our own families and all Canadians. I know that the hon. member on the other side may be interested more in terms of tax cuts to large corporations as he was referring to the Americans but I know that this side of the House is very much interested in all Canadians sharing in wealth and being able to have for their children and their families all that we want for all of our own. I wonder when he is going to read the books that explain how this country has been doing extremely well because of the sensible policies we have been putting forward to ensure clean air and clean water, and security and safety for all of our citizens.

It is a pleasure to see the member for Abbotsford over there. The only shame is that he will not be running again.

Mr. James Rajotte: Mr. Speaker, it would be helpful to review some of the policies, especially the monetary policies, which were the result of a lot of the work that people like John Crow did. The number of exports that went up in Canada over the last 15 years has been dramatic, particularly to the largest consumer nation in the world, the United States. Therefore, perhaps I should credit the government for implementing the United States-Canada free trade agreement and NAFTA agreement. However, the Liberals did not do that. They promised to reverse that. Then they got into office and relied on a Conservative government initiative to balance the books. They know that is how they did it.

* * *

● (1730)

[*Translation*]

QUARANTINE ACT

The House resumed from May 6 consideration of the motion in relation to the amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-12, an act to prevent the introduction and spread of communicable diseases.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): Pursuant to the order made on May 6, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion in relation to the amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-12.

Call in the members.

● (1800)

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

(*Division No. 80*)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Adams	Alcock
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson (Victoria)
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)	Angus
Augustine	Bagnell
Bains	Bakopanos
Barnes	Batters
Beaumier	Bélanger
Bell	Bennett

Government Orders

Benoit	Bevilacqua	Regan	Reid
Bezan	Blaikie	Reynolds	Richardson
Blondin-Andrew	Boivin	Ritz	Robillard
Bonin	Boshcoff	Rodriguez	Rota
Boudria	Bradshaw	Saada	Savage
Breitkreuz	Brison	Savoy	Scarpaleggia
Broadbent	Brown (Oakville)	Scheer	Schellenberger
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Bulte	Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Scott
Byrne	Cannis	Sgro	Siksay
Carr	Carrie	Silva	Simard (Saint Boniface)
Carroll	Casey	Simms	Skelton
Casson	Catterall	Smith (Pontiac)	Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)
Chamberlain	Chan	Solberg	Sorenson
Chatters	Chong	St. Amand	St. Denis
Christopherson	Coderre	Steckle	Stinson
Comartin	Comuzzi	Stoffer	Strahl
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	Stronach	Szabo
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cummins	Telegdi	Temelkovski
Cuzner	D'Amours	Thibault (West Nova)	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Davies	Day	Thompson (Wild Rose)	Tilson
Desjarlais	DeVillers	Toews	Tonks
Devolin	Dhalla	Torsney	Trost
Dion	Dosanjh	Tweed	Ur
Doyle	Drouin	Valeri	Valley
Dryden	Duncan	Van Loan	Vellacott
Easter	Emerson	Volpe	Wappel
Epp	Eyking	Warawa	Wasylycia-Leis
Finley	Fitzpatrick	Watson	White
Fletcher	Folco	Wilfert	Williams
Fontana	Forsth	Wrzesnewskyj	Yelich
Frulla	Fry	Zed- — 249	
Gallant	Galloway		
Godbout	Godfrey		
Godin	Goldring		
Goodale	Goodyear		
Gouk	Graham		
Grewal (Newton—North Delta)	Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)		
Guarnieri	Guergis	André	Asselin
Hanger	Harper	Bachand	Bellavance
Harris	Harrison	Bergeron	Bigras
Heam	Hiebert	Blais	Boire
Hill	Hinton	Bonsant	Bouchard
Holland	Hubbard	Boulianne	Bourgeois
Ianno	Jaffer	Brunelle	Cardin
Jean	Jennings	Carrier	Clavet
Johnston	Julian	Cleary	Côté
Kadis	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Crête	Demers
Karetak-Lindell	Karygiannis	Deschamps	Desrochers
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Duceppe	Faille
Khan	Kilgour	Gagnon (Québec)	Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)	Gaudet
Lapierre (Outremont)	Lastewka	Gauthier	Guay
Lauzon	Layton	Guimond	Kotto
LeBlanc	Lee	Laframboise	Lalonde
Longfield	Lukiwski	Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)	Lavallée
Lunn	Lunney	Lemay	Lessard
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)	Lévesque	Loubier
MacKenzie	Macklin	Marceau	Ménard (Hochelaga)
Malhi	Maloney	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Paquette
Mark	Marleau	Perron	Picard (Drummond)
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Plamondon	Poirier-Rivard
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Roy	Sauvageau
Masse	Matthews	Simard (Beauport—Limoilou)	St-Hilaire
McCallum	McDonough	Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
McGuinty	McGuire	Vincent- — 54	
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLellan		
McTeague	Miller		
Merrifield	Minna		
Mills	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)		
Mitchell	Murphy		
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Neville		
Myers	O'Brien		
Nicholson	Obhrai		
O'Connor	Owen		
Oda	Pallister		
Pacetti	Parrish		
Paradis	Penson		
Patry	Pettigrew		
Peterson	Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)		
Phinney	Powers		
Poillievre	Preston		
Prentice	Rajotte		
Proulx	Redman		
Ratansi			

NAYS

Members

Asselin
Bellavance
Bigras
Boire
Bouchard
Bourgeois
Cardin
Clavet
Côté
Demers
Desrochers
Faille
Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)
Gaudet
Guay
Kotto
Lalonde
Lavallée
Lessard
Loubier
Ménard (Hochelaga)
Paquette
Picard (Drummond)
Poirier-Rivard
Sauvageau
St-Hilaire

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Amendments read the second time and concurred in)

* * *

*[English]***ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCY OF CANADA FOR THE REGIONS OF QUEBEC ACT**

The House resumed from May 9 consideration of the motion that Bill C-9, an act to establish the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, as amended, be concurred in.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at report stage of Bill C-9.

• (1815)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 81*)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Adams	Alcock
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson (Victoria)
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)	Angus
Augustine	Bagnell
Bains	Bakopanos
Barnes	Batters
Beaumier	Bélangier
Bell	Bennett
Benoit	Bevilacqua
Bezan	Blaikie
Blondin-Andrew	Boivin
Bonin	Boshcoff
Boudria	Bradshaw
Breitkreuz	Brison
Broadbent	Brown (Oakville)
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Bulte
Byrne	Cannis
Carr	Carrie
Carroll	Casey
Casson	Catterall
Chamberlain	Chan
Chatters	Chong
Christopherson	Coderre
Comartin	Comuzzi
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cummins
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davies	Day
Desjarlais	DeVillers
Devolin	Dhalla
Dion	Dosanjh
Doyle	Drouin
Dryden	Duncan
Easter	Emerson
Epp	Eyking
Finley	Fitzpatrick
Fletcher	Folco
Fontana	Forseth
Frulla	Fry
Gallant	Galloway
Godbout	Godfrey
Godin	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Graham	Grewal (Newton—North Delta)
Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)	Guamieri
Guergis	Harper
Harris	Harrison
Hearn	Hiebert
Hill	Hinton
Holland	Hubbard
Ianno	Jaffer
Jean	Jennings
Johnston	Julian
Kadis	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karetak-Lindell	Karygiannis
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Khan	Kilgour
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lapierre (Outremont)	Lastewka
Lauzon	Layton
LeBlanc	Lee
Longfield	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Macklin

Malhi
Mark
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Masse
McCallum
McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McTeague
Merrifield
Mills
Mitchell
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Myers
Nicholson
O'Connor
Oda
Pacetti
Paradis
Patry
Peterson
Phinney
Poilievre
Prentice
Proulx
Ratansi
Regan
Reynolds
Ritz
Rodriguez
Saada
Savoy
Scheer
Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Sgro
Silva
Simms
Smith (Pontiac)
Solberg
St. Amand
Steckle
Stoffler
Stronach
Telegdi
Thibault (West Nova)
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Toews
Torsney
Tweed
Valeri
Van Loan
Volpe
Warawa
Watson
Wilfert
Wrzesnewskyj
Zed— 247

Government Orders

Maloney
Marleau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Mathews
McDonough
McGuire
McLellan
Menzies
Miller
Minna
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Murphy
Neville
O'Brien
Obhrai
Owen
Pallister
Parrish
Penson
Pettigrew
Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)
Powers
Preston
Rajotte
Redman
Reid
Richardson
Robillard
Rota
Savage
Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger
Scott
Siksay
Simard (Saint Boniface)
Skelton
Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)
Sorenson
St. Denis
Stinson
Strahl
Szabo
Temelkovski
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Tilson
Tonks
Trost
Ur
Valley
Vellacott
Wappel
Wasylycia-Leis
White
Williams
Yelich

NAYS

Members

Asselin
Bellavance
Bigras
Boire
Bouchard
Bourgeois
Cardin
Clavet
Côté
Demers
Desrochers
Faille
Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)
Gaudet
Guay
Kotto
Lalonde
Lavallée
Lessard
Loubier
Ménard (Hochelaga)
Paquette

Routine Proceedings

Perron
Plamondon
Roy
Simard (Beauport—Limoilou)
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
Vincent — 54

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

The House resumed from May 9 consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment to the motion of concurrence to the first report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts in the name of the hon. member for Edmonton—St. Albert.

The question is on the amendment.

● (1825)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 82)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
André	Asselin
Bachand	Batters
Bellavance	Benoit
Bergeron	Bezan
Bigras	Blais
Boire	Bonsant
Bouchard	Boulianne
Bourgeois	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brunelle
Cardin	Carrie
Carrier	Casey
Casson	Chatters
Chong	Clavet
Cleary	Côté
Crête	Cummins
Day	Demers
Deschamps	Desrochers
Devolin	Doyle
Duceppe	Duncan
Epp	Faillie
Finley	Fitzpatrick
Fletcher	Forsyth
Gagnon (Québec)	Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)
Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)	Gallant
Gaudet	Gauthier
Goldring	Goodyear
Gouk	Grewal (Newton—North Delta)
Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)	Guay
Guergis	Guimond

Hanger
Harris
Hearn
Hill
Jaffer
Johnston
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lalonde
Lauzon
Lemay
Lévesque
Lukiwski
Lunney
MacKenzie
Mark
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Merrifield
Mills
Moore (Fundy Royal)
O'Connor
Oda
Paquette
Perron
Plamondon
Poirier-Rivard
Preston
Reid
Richardson
Roy
Scheer
Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Skelton
Solberg
St-Hilaire
Strahl
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Toews
Tweed
Vellacott
Warawa
White
Yelich — 153

Harper
Harrison
Hiebert
Hinton
Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kotto
Laframboise
Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)
Lavallée
Lessard
Loubier
Lunn
MacKay (Central Nova)
Marceau
Ménard (Hochelaga)
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Nicholson
Obhrai
Pallister
Penson
Picard (Drummond)
Poilievre
Prentice
Rajotte
Reynolds
Ritz
Sauvageau
Schellenberger
Simard (Beauport—Limoilou)
Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)
Sorenson
Stinson
Stronach
Tilson
Trost
Van Loan
Vincent
Watson
Williams

NAYS

Members

Alcock
Angus
Bagnell
Bakopanos
Beaumier
Bell
Bevilacqua
Blondin-Andrew
Bonin
Boudria
Brisson
Brown (Oakville)
Byrne
Carr
Catterall
Chan
Coderre
Comuzzi
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cuzner
Davies
DeVillers
Dion
Drouin
Easter
Eyking
Fontana
Fry
Godbout
Godin
Graham
Holland
Ianno

Routine Proceedings

Jennings
Kadis
Karygiannis
Kilgour
Lastewka
LeBlanc
Longfield
Macklin
Maloney
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (LaSalle—Énard)
Masse
McCallum
McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McTeague
Mitchell
Myers
O'Brien
Pacetti
Parrish
Peterson
Phinney
Powers
Ratansi
Regan
Rodriguez
Saada
Savoy
Scott
Siksay
Simard (Saint Boniface)
Smith (Pontiac)
St. Denis
Stoffer
Telegdi
Thibault (West Nova)
Torsney
Valeri
Volpe
Wasylcia-Leis
Wrzesnewskyj

Julian
Karetak-Lindell
Khan
Lapierre (Outremont)
Layton
Lee
MacAulay
Malhi
Marleau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Matthews
McDonough
McGuire
McLellan
Minna
Murphy
Neville
Owen
Paradis
Patry
Pettigrew
Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)
Proulx
Redman
Robillard
Rota
Savage
Scarpaleggia
Sgro
Silva
Simms
St. Amand
Steckle
Szabo
Temelkovski
Tonks
Ur
Valley
Wappel
Wilfert
Zed— 150

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the amendment carried.

[*English*]

The next question is on the main motion, as amended. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Hon. Karen Redman: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you could seek unanimous consent to apply this vote so that members present in the chamber having voted on the previous question be deemed as voting on this question, with all Liberals in the House voting no.

The Speaker: I sense there is no consent to apply the vote. All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

● (1835)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 83*)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Allison
Anders
André
Bachand
Bellavance
Bergeron
Bigras
Boire
Bouchard
Bourgeois
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Cardin
Carrier
Casson
Chong
Cleary
Crête
Day
Deschamps
Devolin
Duceppe
Epp
Finley
Fletcher
Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)
Gaudet
Goldring
Gouk
Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)
Guergis
Hanger
Harris
Hearn
Hill
Jaffer
Johnston
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Komarnicki
Kram (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lalonde
Lauzon
Lemay
Lévesque
Lukowski
Lunney
MacKenzie
Mark
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Merrifield
Mills
Moore (Fundy Royal)
O'Connor
Oda
Paquette
Perron
Plamondon
Poirier-Rivard
Preston
Reid
Richardson
Roy
Scheer
Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Skelton
Solberg
St-Hilaire
Strahl

Ablonczy
Ambrose
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Asselin
Batters
Benoit
Bezan
Blais
Bonsant
Boulianne
Breitkreuz
Brunelle
Carrie
Casey
Chatters
Clavet
Côté
Cummins
Demers
Desrochers
Doyle
Duncan
Faille
Fitzpatrick
Forsyth
Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)
Gallant
Gauthier
Goodyear
Grewal (Newton—North Delta)
Guay
Guimond
Harper
Harrison
Hiebert
Hinton
Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kotto
Laframboise
Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)
Lavallée
Lessard
Loubier
Lunn
MacKay (Central Nova)
Marceau
Ménard (Hochelaga)
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Nicholson
Obhrai
Pallister
Penson
Picard (Drummond)
Poilievre
Prentice
Rajotte
Reynolds
Ritz
Sauvageau
Schellenberger
Simard (Beauport—Limoilou)
Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)
Sorenson
Stinson
Stronach

Routine Proceedings

Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
 Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
 Thompson (Wild Rose)
 Toews
 Tweed
 Vellacott
 Warawa
 White
 Yelich — 153

Tilson
 Trost
 Van Loan
 Vincent
 Watson
 Williams

Torsney
 Valeri
 Volpe
 Wasylcyia-Leis
 Wrzesnewskij

Ur
 Valley
 Wappel
 Wilfert
 Zed — 150

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

NAYS

Members

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 Bélanger
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 Broadbent
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 Carroll
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 Christopherson
 Comartin
 Crowder
 Cullen (Etobicoke North)
 D'Amours
 Desjarlais
 Dhalla
 Dosanjh
 Dryden
 Emerson
 Folco
 Frulla
 Gallaway
 Godfrey
 Goodale
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 Hubbard
 Jennings
 Kadis
 Karygiannis
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 McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
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 Simard (Saint Boniface)
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 Karetak-Lindell
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 Lapierre (Outremont)
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 Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
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 Matthews
 McDonough
 McGuire
 McLellan
 Minna
 Murphy
 Neville
 Owen
 Paradis
 Patry
 Pettigrew
 Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)
 Proulx
 Redman
 Robillard
 Rota
 Savage
 Scarpaleggia
 Sgro
 Silva
 Simms
 St. Amand
 Steckle
 Szabo
 Temelkovski
 Tonks

Hon. Stephen Harper: Mr. Speaker, we have just voted on a motion that was agreed to on a clear majority, a motion which calls upon the government to resign.

● (1840)
 [English]

By all of the established conventions of our democratic system, when the government faces a clear vote on such a question, it is required to do at least one of three things: it is required to fulfill the terms of the motion and resign; to seek a dissolution; or at the earliest moment, to ensure that it indeed has the confidence of this chamber, which is the only democratic mandate this government has to spend our public money.

Since I understand that the Prime Minister, in his desire to cling to power at all costs, has refused to do—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition is trying to raise a point of order. I know it is going slowly because there is a lot of noise, but perhaps he could come to the point of the point of order quickly because we need to know what the point of order is.

Hon. Stephen Harper: Mr. Speaker, since the government has refused to follow either of the first two courses of action, I would challenge the Prime Minister, if he believes he has the constitutional authority to govern, to rise in this place and call for a vote of confidence, if he believes he has it from this House.

The Speaker: A challenge to the Prime Minister does not a point of order make, but perhaps the government House leader is rising to respond to this point of order?

Hon. Tony Valeri: Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond and ensure that any Canadian who is actually watching the proceeding clearly understands that the leader of the official opposition has no knowledge of what in fact the motion actually said that he put forward.

It is an instruction to a committee. That instruction to the committee and the issue of it not being confidence is supported by Marleau and Montpetit and many other experts in procedure and constitutional affairs.

I would suggest that the leader of the official opposition leave as he is and we will continue to govern on behalf of Canadians.

[Translation]

The Speaker: The leader of the Bloc Québécois now has a comment to make on the point of order.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to point out that—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Gilles Duceppe: If the people across the way could just stop yelling.

I would just like to point out that the vote by each member of the Bloc Québécois constitutes a vote of non-confidence in the Liberal government, which no longer has the necessary moral authority to govern and which is headed by a prime minister who is discredited more every day in this House, as well as by the revelations coming out of the Gomery inquiry.

The Speaker: Obviously there are no points of order in this. The leader of the Bloc Québécois has stated his opinion. We can therefore continue with other House business.

[English]

Mr. Paul Szabo: Respectfully, Mr. Speaker, you determined that the last vote was carried. It was on a motion that the matter be referred back to committee. You did not say that. Is it in fact the instruction of this House that this matter now be referred back to committee?

The Speaker: Yes, it is.

It being 6.45 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1845)

[English]

HERITAGE LIGHTHOUSE PROTECTION ACT

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC) moved that Bill S-14, an act to protect heritage lighthouses, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to ask your opinion on Bill S-14. It seems that it ought to be accompanied by a royal recommendation.

As Marleau and Montpetit notes:

Under the Canadian system of government, the Crown alone initiates all public expenditure and Parliament may only authorize spending which has been recommended by the Governor General.

This is an essential feature of our system of responsible government.

I wish to draw your attention to section 17 of Bill S-14, which requires that:

The owner of a heritage lighthouse shall maintain it in a reasonable state of repair and in a manner that is in keeping with its heritage character.

Over time this requirement will necessarily involve the expenditure of very significant funds by the owner.

Most of the lighthouses in Canada are the property of the federal Crown, given Parliament's jurisdiction over "Beacons, Buoys, Lighthouses and Sable Island" under section 92(9) of the British North America Act, 1867.

Private Members' Business

The bill is, by section 5, made binding on Her Majesty in right of Canada, demonstrating a clear intention to include federal government properties within the scope of the bill. It is estimated that the cost to Parks Canada and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans could be as high as \$235 million over five years, with significant ongoing costs.

When this bill's predecessor was debated in the previous Parliament as Bill S-7, the Speaker ruled that the bill did not require a royal recommendation. This ruling seemed to focus on the fact that the bill did not immediately impose an obligation to expend public funds since there would not be any heritage lighthouses to maintain until the governor in council designated some.

To my knowledge, the timing of an expenditure has not been a factor in previous rulings. If a bill involves a new and distinct cost to the Crown, it surely does not matter if the cost is incurred immediately upon assent of the bill or at some future point.

Moreover, if we examine the provisions of government bills accompanied by a royal recommendation, we find that only a minority of them actually oblige the government to expend given amounts.

A money bill simply authorizes the activity that will incur an expenditure and leaves the decision in individual cases to a minister, the cabinet or some administrative body.

Erskine May disposes of the issue very succinctly. It states:

The same [i.e. the requirement of a new and distinct charge] applies to a totally new legislative purpose which imposes only a potential liability on public expenditure.

For example, the argument cannot be sustained that a proposal to confer on a Minister a discretionary power to expend money in certain circumstances escapes the need for a Money resolution because the circumstances may not arise or the discretion may not be exercised.

This is found in *Parliamentary Practice*, 22nd edition at page 763.

The Speaker also appeared to rely on the fact that the bill was modelled on the Heritage Railway Stations Protection Act, which had itself been introduced without a royal recommendation.

While the two bills share many features, they differ in one critical respect. The railway stations act does not impose an express obligation to maintain the structures, whereas Bill S-14 does. In any case, stations are owned by private companies, while the cost of maintaining heritage lighthouses will be borne by the public purse.

Therefore I conclude that this bill should properly be accompanied by a royal recommendation and I hope the Chair will consider these points carefully.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Speaker, I must say that I am a little surprised that the hon. member chose to bring these points forward at this time. I have no problem offering a rebuttal, but usually on private members' business a member would take that opportunity to walk across the floor and speak to the member supporting the bill.

Obviously the bill does incur some financial obligation on the government if it were to pass in its present format. The suggestion would be that all of those details could be looked after at committee.

Private Members' Business

This bill, or versions of it, has now come to the House for the third time. It has passed the Senate. It was passed in the last Parliament by the Senate. What we are actually dealing with here is property that is incurring a federal cost now. This property is already owned by the federal government so we are spending money for the upkeep of lighthouses. We are not putting new costs in here.

Because many of these lighthouses are being divested to private ownership, we are asking that in the future the owners, be they provincial, municipal or private, would have some responsibility to keep at least the physical outside of the lighthouse in the condition that would speak to its heritage and the era in which it was built.

As far as additional federal costs, actually less federal money would be spent in the future on lighthouses than there is now. To this day, there is a federal cost to lighthouses. I do not understand the logic of the member's intervention.

• (1850)

Mr. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the chief government whip is going to rise on a point of order on this issue she should get her facts straight.

In her point of order she referenced the BNA Act, 1867. There is no such thing as the BNA Act, 1867. There use to be an act entitled the British North America Act, 1867 but that no longer exists. There is an act entitled the Constitution Act, 1867. If she is referring to that she should clarify that. If she is rising on such a point of order, then I go back to my original point, which is that she should get her facts straight.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak briefly to the point of order.

It is very important for people to realize that we are dealing with federal government obligations that now exist and that the existing heritage protection for our lighthouses is woefully inadequate. This is broadly recognized as something that needs to be addressed.

I would simply add my voice to those who are pleading the case for the government spokesperson to recognize that the details can be debated at second reading.

I will quote directly from the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society which said, "We need help in keeping the lighthouses from the ravages of neglect and the processes of disposal".

This is an urgent matter. I hope, in some spirit of making this Parliament work, and in showing that the acrimony is not so great that people are obstructing all progress in the House, that there can be debate and the bill can be referred to committee where the kinds of concerns raised by the government member can be addressed.

I hope she is not trying to kill a very important initiative that has been supported over many years by people who are concerned that we are losing our lighthouse heritage.

The Speaker: The hon. chief government whip has raised this matter. I thank the hon. member for South Shore—St. Margaret's and the members for Halifax and Wellington—Halton Hills for their interventions.

It is quite normal to have this issue raised at this stage of proceedings on a private member's bill. The Chair will take the matter under consideration and get back to the House.

Debate can proceed on second reading. It can go, in fact, up until third reading and it is only at third reading that, if a royal recommendation is required, no further proceedings on the bill can go on. That question may not be determined until the bill has been reported from the committee and we see it in its final form, ready to proceed to third reading. However I will get back to the House and make a ruling on this matter in due course.

The hon. member for Durham is rising on another point of order in respect to the bill.

• (1855)

Ms. Bev Oda (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order. Following consultations I believe if you seek it you would find unanimous consent for the following amendment. I move, seconded by the member for South Shore—St. Margaret's:

That the motion for the second reading of Bill S-14, an act to protect heritage lighthouses, be amended by deleting the words "Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage" and replacing them with the words "Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development".

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to the proposed change to the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Amendment agreed to)

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pride to rise in the House this evening to once again support this bill from the Senate with the idea of preserving lighthouses, certainly not just in Atlantic Canada but throughout coastal Canada, across Atlantic Canada, in the north, in western Canada and even inland. There are only two provinces in Canada that do not have lighthouses: Alberta and Saskatchewan. All other provinces have lighthouses.

I would like to comment further on the intervention by the member for Durham. The importance of that intervention is that Parks Canada became a part of the Department of the Environment, a move that was passed by order in council in December 2003. The legislation making it official was passed in the House in February. Parks Canada is the correct department and that is where we should be going. Therefore, we have to go to the environment committee rather than the heritage committee.

There is a very good reason for putting parks under environment. It is believed to be a better fit with regard to the fact that for parks and the environment, historic sites such as lighthouses make up only a small part of Parks Canada. In one way, it seems like a bit of an odd fit but it is a fit. The budget for lighthouses comes from Parks Canada, which is under environment, so it needs to go to the environment committee. I wanted to have that on the record.

Private Members' Business

I also would like to read into the record some comments from my hon. colleague, Senator Forrestall, who has supported this bill and has done yeoman service in the Senate on this piece of legislation. I believe this is the third time that it has come to the House of Commons. Prorogation twice prevented it from being passed and we are back here once again with the belief that all members will support this extremely important bill.

I would like to read into the record a brief portion of hon. Senator Forrestall's comments, because I think they ring extremely true to the very gist of this bill. He said:

I am pleased...to speak to Bill S-14, [an act] to protect heritage lighthouses. This is neither a partisan nor a money issue. Steps must be taken to preserve and protect Canadian heritage for future generations, whether that be [heritage properties], railway property, lighthouses or, perhaps in the not-too-distant future, grain elevators...These are monuments to the Canadian way of life.

We have been over this ground three times. The bill has now passed through the Senate twice and then on to the House of Commons to committee twice before prorogation. Twice previously this bill has been fast tracked and we ask for speedy passage again.

He continued, saying:

—there is no question of the place of the lighthouse in the human heart and its simplistic beauty set against the rugged, dark sea and coast. One does not have to be from the shores of the Atlantic or the Pacific to be attracted to lighthouses.

I appreciate those words of Senator Forrestall. Once again I would like to be on the record in thanking him for all the hard work he has done in keeping this issue alive, and quite frankly, before we lose more of our lights, due not just to neglect but to the ravages of the ocean they are there to protect.

As I have mentioned, only two provinces, Alberta and Saskatchewan, do not have a lighthouse. Of the roughly 500 lighthouses across the country, only 19 have full protection as heritage sites. While 101 others have partial protection, lighthouses have heritage status and they fall under the jurisdiction of Parks Canada. Surely we can do a better job than protecting just 19 of the historic lighthouses in Canada.

● (1900)

I have spoken to this legislation on several occasions in the House. Lighthouses are very much a part of Canadian culture, not just Canadian maritime culture but Canadian culture. Not only are they part of our culture, they are part of our storytelling, our folklore and our songs. There is as much of a lighthouse inside every Canadian as there is a maple leaf.

There is no Canadian who does not have a picture of a lighthouse. Very few Canadians have not visited the historic light at Peggy's Cove in Nova Scotia, which falls inside the boundaries of my riding of South Shore—St. Margaret's. I would argue strenuously that no Canadians living today cannot picture the Peggy's Cove lighthouse in their mind when I say the name.

Lighthouses stand as historic focal points for communities where they have watched over generations of our forefathers as they have traversed our seas. Further, some of these lighthouses serve as an important part of local economies across the country, as many have restaurants, inns or museums nearby.

Bill S-14 is of personal importance to me because there are 135 heritage lighthouses in Nova Scotia. Let us remember that only 19 lighthouses are fully protected and 101 are partially protected. In Nova Scotia alone there are 135 lights that should be protected. This figure does not include a great many of the smaller towers. It does include the 28 major lighthouses in my riding of South Shore—St. Margaret's.

These lights are not just part of our culture and our seafaring tradition but part of our communities. In the days when those lights were manned, the lightkeeper was an integral part of the community, often having access not just to the light but to Morse code and to a telegraph. The keeper could actually pick up, send to and receive messages from offshore vessels and certainly from vessels in distress.

There are dozens and dozens of communities in Nova Scotia and on the Pacific coast, in Atlantic Canada and in Quebec, where, when darkness falls, the light on the lighthouse can be seen rotating to this day. There are a lot fewer than there used to be, but they are still there and they are still very much a part of our maritime way of life.

Can anyone in the House imagine our province of Nova Scotia without its lights at Peggy's Cove, West Head, Hawk Point, Coffin Island, Seal Island—

An hon. member: Or Advocate.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: —or Advocate or Digby? There are lights throughout coastal Canada that are an important part of the fabric of our society. We cannot afford to lose these lights at this time when we are in the best of times in this country through no fault of the government but simply through hard work by Canadian taxpayers. We can afford to save them.

I do not mean to make this into a partisan discussion, but if we can find money for other things, if we can find money to keep the government alive, then we can find the pittance, the almost pitiful amount of money, that it would take to keep these lights operating.

We are not looking for hundreds of millions of dollars. We are looking for legislation that would allow these lights to be protected in perpetuity. The current legislation is not enough to protect lighthouses.

Two federal bodies have the power to select and designate heritage lighthouses, the Federal Heritage Building Review Office and the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, yet they have only managed to protect 19 of the over 500 lighthouses in this country. They have managed to partially protect only another 101.

I am not about to suggest that we can save every light and keep every light in Canada operational. I am suggesting that we can maintain the physical part of the light. The lights could be kept in them, and with technology today, the ability to keep the light on would be a lot cheaper than it was years ago. We have better systems and better technologies to keep the light on.

Private Members' Business

•(1905)

If we speak to the fishermen, the people who have traditionally used the light, we will learn that with all of the technology available there are still occasions when they depend upon that light for navigation or they depend for safety upon a foghorn associated with the light. When all technology fails and they are coming home on a stormy sea, in the fog or in the dark, a navigational beacon is important.

If any members have ever been in those circumstances, they know that the value of those lights is not to be taken lightly. They are still very important. They still have a safety value and they still have a navigational value, even with all the technology we have today.

I would sincerely urge all of my colleagues in this House to look at Bill S-14 and to look at the manner in which it was brought forth. I appreciate all the good work that was done in the Senate in fast tracking this bill. I appreciate the fact that it has made it to the floor of the House of Commons. But with a very tenuous grip on government, we may not have a lot of time, so I would urge everyone with all possible haste to make sure this bill passes and to get it to committee to make any changes that need to be made.

We are amenable to changes, but we are not amenable to not having this bill pass, to having more lights fall into the ocean where they can never be recovered and to having more lights sold to private individuals who have no responsibility for maintaining the outside physical structure of the light and keeping it as a heritage property, as we would with any other heritage property in Canada.

We are not asking for the sun and the moon and the stars. We are asking for this very good, solid, commonsense piece of legislation to be passed forthwith from the House, to go to committee and come back for third reading, so that we will be able to save at least one more lighthouse before the ravages of time and the sea take more of them from us.

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, being from a province that the member says does not have a lighthouse, I must say that we do have one very small lighthouse that I know of. It is at Cochin, Saskatchewan, on the edge of a lake, but it is very small.

My hon. colleague mentioned privatization. Is this what the government has been doing? Could he further explain that whole idea for me?

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Speaker, for the last 10 years the government has been pursuing a divestiture process with lighthouses. There have been many divestitures. It has accelerated in the last few years. A number of them have been sold off.

As in all federal divestiture processes, the lighthouse first gets offered to the province, then to the municipality and then to private individuals. In the United States, a great many lights are now owned by private individuals. When the government is divesting the light, it also divests property. That property is ocean frontage and it is valuable. There should be some onus on the new owner of the lighthouse to keep that heritage property in shape.

I do not have the exact numbers in my head, but I have assisted with at least five or six divestiture processes in the riding of South

Shore—St. Margaret's with local lighthouse groups. The Sandy Point lighthouse group in Shelburne county actually took over one lighthouse and has done a lot of great work with it, maintaining it and doing the upkeep of the light.

There is very much a concentrated and accelerated process on behalf of the government to rid itself of these lights. We need to protect them now.

•(1910)

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I commend the member for South Shore—St. Margaret's for continuing the battle for us to preserve our lighthouse heritage in a far more effective manner than is being done to date.

I would like to follow up on the comments the member has made about what is happening with respect to privatization of our lighthouses. In his view, does the bill before us provide adequate protection against the possibility that in the divestiture processes taking place now a particular lighthouse could be divested to a provincial or municipal government and then, in turn, the provincial or municipal government could end up privatizing it? Is there sufficient protection in the existing legislative framework and further in the bill before us or is it his view that at committee there has to be a strengthening to ensure that in the process of divestiture and then the possible future privatization that the heritage lighthouses are not lost for all time?

In the commercial usage of a lighthouse by a private operator that acquires it from a provincial or municipal government in the divestiture process, are the protections sufficient to ensure that it is not lost from the public domain and, therefore, no protection for our heritage property in that sense?

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Speaker, there is a fair amount of work that needs to be done at committee. We need to explore a number of avenues. There is no real difficulty with the bill. However, the difficulty of not moving forward with it means we are doing nothing and then exactly what the member is talking about comes into play.

We continue to lose our lighthouses at an alarming rate. Some of them literally fall into the ocean because of the ravages of the sea. We would continue to have divestiture, as she has said, to the provincial and municipal governments, and they are taking on a cost. That is why I think it is so important to designate the rest of the lighthouses, which should have historical heritage designation, immediately so we do not simply have 19 in all of Canada with that designation.

At least another 100 of them would classify as heritage properties. We need to be very careful about the commercialization aspect. Some of the lighthouses will end up being passed into the hands of private individuals. The idea of the bill is to offer some protection to at least the physical structure outside of the lighthouses and to continue with the silhouette of the lighthouse on the skyline, or on an island or next to the ocean.

I do not know if we can control it all, but we can do a better job than we have done. It is very important that we do it forthwith.

Private Members' Business

•(1915)

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise this evening to talk about this important issue for Canadians and to the government: the protection of built heritage. Canada's historic places represent the soul and the spirit of Canada. These places mark the lives and the stories of those who forged this country.

Historic places can be buildings, battlefields, lighthouses, shipwrecks, parks, archaeological sites, cultural landscapes, bridges, homes, grave sites, railway stations, historic districts, ruins, engineering wonders, schools, canals, courthouses, theatres or markets. They can be large and perfectly intact. They can be small and have only fragments of their history remaining.

What Canada's historic places require is commitment by Canadians to protect and value them. It is such a commitment that we see reflected in the bill before us today, an act to protect heritage lighthouses. The intention of Bill S-14 is to protect heritage lighthouses within the legislative authority of Parliament by providing a means for their designation as heritage lighthouses, by providing an opportunity for public consultation before authorization is given for the removal, alteration, destruction, sale, assignment, transfer or other disposition of a designated heritage lighthouse and by requiring that designated heritage lighthouses be reasonably maintained.

Canada has a rich history of lighthouses associated to our strong traditions in maritime navigation. The first lighthouse in what would become Canada was at Louisbourg in August 1731 and was completed two years later. The remains of this lighthouse continue to be protected within the Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Site.

In the 19th century the systematic lighting of Canada's coasts began in earnest and lighthouses were erected in critical locations first, then driven by vested interests like the desire to establish and keep safe a faster mail service and placed in response to calamities. Some of Canada's lighthouses mark significant engineering achievement involving innovations in lighting systems, fog signals and extraordinary construction efforts. Some exhibit exceptional esthetic qualities and some lighthouses, such as that in Peggy's Cove, have come to symbolize our country.

Lighthouses have played an important role in our development as a nation. Senator Forrestall is to be congratulated for his efforts to see that this significant building type is protected. Indeed, his perseverance in having introduced the bill on five separate occasions indicates a remarkable dedication to the protection of lighthouses.

Bill S-14 calls for the designation of heritage lighthouses by the governor in council on the recommendation of the minister and provides for public petitions to trigger the designation process. At the minister's request, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada would be responsible for considering such lighthouses for recommendation to the minister. If the board were involved, it would be obliged to allow the public to make presentations.

Bill S-14 also provides for a system in which any person can object to proposed alterations to or for the disposal of a designated lighthouse. If this were to occur, the minister, with the advice of

Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada would have to decide whether or not to authorize this action.

The effect of the bill would be to protect a great number of lighthouses which do not currently enjoy protection through a new designation program. It would place new obligations on the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada to administer this program, establish new powers for the minister responsible for bill over his colleagues who hold lighthouses in their departmental portfolios, and require maintenance of any designated structure.

Such obligations come with a price. It is for this reason that the hon. colleague has asked for a point of order regarding whether the bill constitutes a money bill. Bill S-14 would create a program, the lighthouse protection program, which does not exist today.

The associated implementation costs are unavoidable and it is estimated it would cost around \$235 million over five years and more than \$18 million per year ongoing. My hon. colleague has acted in the public interest in seeking confirmation of the financial prerogative of the Crown.

•(1920)

In light of such expenditures, the government must ask whether a program such as proposed in Bill S-14 is the most efficient and effective way to protect built heritage.

Although the Government of Canada supports the principles behind Bill S-14, and I would underline that we support the principles, we remain concerned that the bill deals only with one type of heritage building.

Lighthouses are a significant building type, without doubt, but so are churches, grain elevators, post offices and museums. I listed quite a number of buildings at the beginning. In supporting Bill S-14, the groundwork is laid for similar costly bills relating to other heritage building types.

The Government of Canada is committed to the protection of built heritage. In the October 2004 Speech from the Throne, the government committed to "foster cultural institutions and policies that aspire to excellence". We also committed "to be unwavering in the application of fiscal discipline".

In order to make the bill more fiscally responsible and to align it with sound policy for heritage institutions, the government will propose a number of amendments. These amendments will seek to streamline the administrative process associated with the bill and invest in those areas which will have the greatest impact on protecting the most significant lighthouses in Canada.

The bill, as drafted, sets a lofty benchmark for the protection of built heritage. In a world of unlimited resources, it would be ideal. However, there are currently many competing demands on the public purse and broad protection for many buildings is not possible. As the Auditor General observed in her 2003 report on the Protection of Cultural Heritage in the Federal Government, lighthouses are already well represented among buildings with heritage designations, while proliferating designations threaten the survival of all heritage buildings. We cannot, unfortunately save them all.

Private Members' Business

The government has analysed the needs of built heritage in Canada in great detail over the past few years and has developed proposals that would respond to these needs.

For many years, Canada has lagged behind other G-8 nations and its own provincial and territorial governments in the protection of historic places. I have certainly talked about this issue before.

In 2002 a public discussion document was released providing an overview of possible legislation to protect built heritage under federal jurisdiction. This paper set out proposals for new legislation to ensure that the Government of Canada would have the tools needed to address gaps in federal heritage protection and to ensure that it could fulfill its stewardship responsibilities for the historic places that it owned.

Consultations have taken place and Parks Canada continues to develop legislative proposals. These proposals would provide legal protection for all historic places on federal lands and for archaeological resources on or under federal lands and waters. The proposed legislation would also formally recognize the Canadian Register of Historic Places and commit the government to the agreed upon conservation standards and guidelines.

The proposed legislation will require the Government of Canada to ensure that its national historic sites and “classified” buildings, those designated to be of utmost historic importance to Canadians, are appropriately maintained and protected. If sold or leased out, specific legal instruments will be put in place to ensure that the building will continue to receive the same high level of conservation protection. This includes 27 lighthouses that are currently covered by these two types of designation.

In the case of “recognized” buildings, the proposed legislation will encourage the use of standards and guidelines and require departments, agencies and crown corporations to take into account the heritage status of the building. Ninety three lighthouses are currently designated as “recognized”.

These legislative proposals are only one aspect of the government's response to the needs of built heritage. A small portion of historic places in Canada are owned by the federal government, so cooperation with others is key. This requires participation by individuals, corporations and other orders of government.

The historic places initiative, which is extremely important, is based on the acknowledgement that government alone cannot save all buildings and other historic places. The keystone of the initiative is a broad national coalition with provinces, territories and municipalities coupled equally with valuable collaboration involving aboriginal peoples and heritage experts.

Budget 2005 commits \$46 million over the next five years to continue to implement the core programs of the historic places initiative, a budget which I hope all members in the House will support.

Parks Canada is also implementing the commercial heritage properties incentive fund announced in 2003.

The government remains committed to the overall objectives of Bill S-14, the protection of iconic and treasured examples of Canada's built heritage, found from coast to coast.

● (1925)

We are interested in preservation and the amendments we will present will try and redefine, to some degree, this initiative. We support the principles that are outlined here. We look forward to further discussion on this and working with the member opposite in ensuring that lighthouses, among other important treasures of this country, are protected.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ) Mr. Speaker, before I begin my intervention, I would like to read a short passage from a book entitled *Sentinels of the St. Lawrence: Along Quebec's Lighthouse Trail* by Patrice Halley, with a foreword by Joël Le Bigot. My colleague for Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia gave it to me at one point, when we first discussed the bill before the House today. I would just like to read you a few lines:

From the time he first mastered fire, man has used artificial light to guide his way in the dark and ensure his safety. The sea is one of the greatest dangers faced over the centuries by man, forever in search of new spaces to conquer. In this fundamental struggle, in the earliest days, the imaginations of sailors conjured up an edifice to guide them safely out of danger, safe from fear and from the enormous solitude of the sea. In this way, the long history of navigation and that of lighthouses are intertwined.

The preface is beautiful and very poetic. The book shows truly remarkable and beautiful buildings. Unfortunately, the poetry and beauty all fade at comments such as the one just made by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment. It is totally discouraging.

I note that the Canadian Coast Guard began automating lighthouses in 1970. Since then, the federal government, which was responsible for heritage, has abandoned it completely. New facilities were built, with their automated lights, in most areas and regions where it seemed necessary. Here too savings were claimed to be the reason, but that has never been proven. The Auditor General reported on the matter more than once, but no one has ever shown that savings were really made.

Today, it appears that those savings were probably false economies. The Auditor General's reports never proved conclusively that the Canadian government actually saved money by automating the lighthouses. We need only think of the cost of the new facilities and their upkeep.

Since 1970, as I was saying, these buildings have been completely abandoned. We have heard that some of these lighthouses have been declared historic monuments and sites and transferred to the Department of Canadian Heritage. Today they are the responsibility of Parks Canada, which looked after them at the time. Over the years, some lighthouses were transferred, but very few.

There is a Management 101 principle that does not seem to have been followed here. And yet it is a simple principle. By the way, my colleague from Sherbrooke, who supports what I have to say, does not have any lighthouses, or “phares” in his riding, only bands, that is, “fanfares”, as he told me earlier. That is typical of his kind of humour.

What I wanted to emphasize is the federal government's total withdrawal, as we see in the rest of its activities since 1983. What has the federal Liberal government done since 1983 with the small craft port and airport infrastructure? What has it done with all the direct services provided to people? It has been constantly and permanently dropping them. The federal government abandons everything that it thinks could cost it something. It tries to get rid of this infrastructure and palm it off on the provinces, the people, or communities that do not have the means to take care of it. It is as simple as that.

First they should invest. According to Management 101 principles, the first thing is to take a real inventory of these structures. That would enable us to determine what repairs are needed. Then criteria would have to be drawn up that are much less demanding than those of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada.

● (1930)

I have some news for them. If people try to get a lighthouse recognized by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, I warn that their work will certainly be cut out for them because very few will be recognized. The criteria are very tough. Most of the lighthouses that could be ceded today to provinces or local communities, for instance, will never be recognized by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board because its criteria are far too strict.

The toughness of the criteria is therefore just a way to justify this government's lack of action on the maintenance of this infrastructure.

What is being done? Unfortunately, the bill would have to be amended to this effect because the criteria are so strict that virtually no lighthouses will be accepted into the program. As requested by Canadians pursuant to consultations, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board is given the task of determining which lighthouses are really historic and part of our heritage. I can say right away that 99% of these lighthouses will not be recognized because the criteria are far too tough.

The federal government must therefore start by assuming its responsibilities. Let us draw up an inventory of the infrastructure. Let us propose new criteria for the Historic Sites and Monuments Board. Then we can assess what the costs would be of repairing and maintaining these structures.

I would remind my colleague from Nova Scotia that, according to a principle of the Canadian Constitution, when the federal government wishes to divest itself of land or infrastructure, it must start by offering it to the province. Then it can be offered to the local communities and municipalities. There is, therefore, a need to work in conjunction with the provinces. The federal government needs to start by drawing up a proper inventory, a proper evaluation of the infrastructure, and then needs to indicate how much it would cost to repair them, by sector or by province.

So first of all there has to be negotiation with the provincial governments to see what can be done with the infrastructure. A real policy is needed—there is none at present—which would require this government to take care of its own business and to do so promptly. As my colleague from Nova Scotia has just said, the bulk of this

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infrastructure is deteriorating rapidly. That is the way the present government does things.

An hon. member: The wharfs.

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy: The wharfs for small craft are a good example. They are left to deteriorate beyond repair at which point it becomes too expensive to bother. The same goes for lighthouses. Since 1970, those no longer being used have been abandoned. They are neither repaired nor maintained. After a while, they are too far gone to be maintained and then they have to be demolished or destroyed.

An hon. member: Or fenced off.

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy: They have to be fenced off, as my colleague from Gaspé says. What is happening to the infrastructure of small craft harbours? A fence is put up to keep people out. The same thing happens when a lighthouse becomes a danger. It is fenced off to prevent people from getting hurt.

I hear the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. He is very much aware of what I am talking about. I hope he will ask his government, even though it is living on borrowed time, to take action and at least give us a draft policy that will enable healthy management of the lighthouses along the St. Lawrence as well as in the Maritimes and British Columbia. They are the very image of the government.

This government has been concerned about infrastructure. It tried to buy us with flags and ads. The Gomery inquiry is in the process of proving it. The members of the government do not even have the courage to take care of their own infrastructure. It would have been so easy to ensure a presence and to have a safe, presentable and usable infrastructure for tourists and locals alike.

I think I have made my point. I hope we will manage to have a real policy one day.

● (1935)

[*English*]

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity this evening to enter into this debate. I am actually quite encouraged by the comments made by the member for Richmond Hill, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment. He indicated I believe a serious intent on the part of the government not to just vote for the bill but to see the bill go to committee and to undertake to put forward serious amendments that hopefully will strengthen the effectiveness of the bill, not weaken it.

I think there is a resolve, and perhaps this is one of those things on which we can come to an agreement and show that the House can be made to work, by ensuring that after second reading it goes to committee.

I want to take the opportunity to congratulate the member for South Shore—St. Margaret's, about whom I have already spoken in acknowledging his continuing campaign for lighthouse preservation. I also wish to congratulate the Senator from Nova Scotia, Senator Forrestall, known back home as Mike, for a relentless devotion to this topic.

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I want to take the occasion to congratulate the hard working members of the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society who are part of a broader and growing network of those who have been working hard to preserve our lighthouse heritage. They have worked tirelessly to bring to light the importance of this issue.

I want to briefly acknowledge the statement of principles that they have put forward in making the case for better lighthouse preservation. They have talked about the need to recognize the cultural and historical significance of lighthouses, but they have also stressed the importance of their natural and environmental settings and their potential as catalysts for the revitalization of coastal communities.

This is something that may not be fully appreciated by those who live in land locked communities. Many communities have struggled to ensure that lighthouses that have been going out of the business of active use in recent years are made a focal point in the broader attempts to revitalize rural and seaside communities. This is something that we need to keep in mind.

There are people that live in provinces that do not have the benefit of any lighthouses. I know Alberta and Saskatchewan were cited, but a member from Saskatchewan stood up and enlightened us to the fact that there is at least one lighthouse in her riding, so I guess we should acknowledge that practically everyone except perhaps land locked Alberta has some lighthouses. For people in those provinces it is understood that lighthouses are so much more than just physical structures.

Lighthouses have been an incredibly important part of everything from keeping seafarers safe to ensuring safe passage and safe landing. Whether it is those who have been using ocean vessels for a mode of transport, trade, commerce, military purposes, or whether it has just been simply for recreational purposes, lives have been saved. I do not know how many. I guess I would not know how to even estimate but probably hundreds of thousands, if not millions over time in our history.

It is important to recognize that there is a quite unique read of whether it is solitary souls or amazing families that have devoted their lives very often under extremely isolated conditions and in conditions of dire hardship to ensure the safety of persons who have been travelling our oceans for whatever purposes. I think we need to recognize that.

There are so many reasons why we need to be taking up this challenge, recognizing that our lighthouse heritage is going to be lost forever if we do not get away beyond the heritage designation of only 19 of our existing lighthouses.

● (1940)

We are losing time. Many lighthouses are simply becoming so dilapidated that they are beyond salvation. I acknowledge the point made by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment whose department has responsibility for this, that it is not realistic for us to talk about preserving every single lighthouse that has ever been in operation. I do not think anyone is suggesting such a thing. However, before it is too late, it is important for us to go through this orderly process of designation. We have to put in

place the structure and the resources to make sure that they are not lost forever.

In the very few minutes left to me I want to turn attention to a particularly special lighthouse that exists in my riding of Halifax, the lighthouse at Sambro. I will say the lighthouse was not in my riding of Halifax until the riding boundaries changed under redistribution.

The lighthouse at Sambro has been in existence since 1758. Sadly, during hurricane Juan which struck my province with an almighty force in the fall of 2003, serious damage was done to the Sambro lighthouse. Some of that damage has been repaired, but not all of it. There is a desperate need to complete the restoration and the repair to the Sambro lighthouse before it is too late. Specifically, it has to do with the gas house, that is the term, that supplied acetylene gas to allow the lighthouse to perform its function.

I have written several times to the minister responsible seeking the commitment of resources to ensure that that repair is done. The community has worked hard. The citizens of Sambro, the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society and those in the broader community who are really seized with this and not just the romanticism and the symbolism of it, recognize it is a critical part of the community. It is a critical part of the revitalization and maintenance of that community. It is a very important tourist attraction.

I hope that as we discuss the need to move hastily to preserve our lighthouse heritage, the minister responsible will recognize that among the very special lighthouses that are already preserved there are sometimes urgent needs, such as the one at Sambro. We must have the resources to fully repair and restore it from the terrible damage done by hurricane Juan.

If we could have a little more of this kind of cooperative, collaborative tone in this House and less of what people see on a daily basis it would be a better day. It would also be a better investment in keeping our political process strong and engendering the kind of respect for democracy that is fast waning in this country. I think people are recoiling in horror at the notion that all we ever do is fight in here and we never really make this place work, or we never come up with concrete solutions.

Let us get this job done. Let us get the bill to committee. Let us invite some of the witnesses who are important for us to hear from. Let us check it off as one more accomplishment in this minority Parliament.

In order to achieve that we need to make sure that this Parliament keeps working. We must not simply go to the electorate for the crassest of self-interest partisan reasons instead of carrying out the mandate that we were given by the people of Canada.

I hope we will do that with respect to this bill and the other responsibilities and challenges that lie before this Parliament.

● (1945)

Ms. Bev Oda (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak to Bill S-14, an act to protect heritage lighthouses, put forward by my colleague, the member for South Shore—St. Margaret's. I also want to commend those in this House and in the Senate who have supported this bill previously in Parliament.

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Lighthouses are an integral part of Canada's heritage and history. There are countless stories of crises in our past in which Canada's lighthouses have played a critical role. Whether it is off the coast of Newfoundland or in the gales of the north Pacific, they have saved the lives of many Canadians and foreigners. Now for many, lighthouses not only provide an essential service but lighthouses have become a special part of what Canada means to them and others around the world.

They have become part of our artistic cultural works in songs, paintings and even tapestry. The picturesque images of Peggy's Cove, and the lighthouse on the northern tip of the Queen Charlotte Islands on Langara Island: these pictures say this is Canada.

These structures identify an integral part of our heritage and draw thousands of international travellers each year. In Ontario, one can take the Bruce Coast lighthouse tour. Each of the 500 lighthouses in Canada has a special meaning in our lives, our history and to the communities in which they are situated. I support this bill as it is urgently needed.

For many of our historic lighthouses, we must offer recognition of their part in our heritage and maintain them for future generations. Without protection, neglect is destroying many of these historic structures. The impact of wind, water and deterioration are destroying these treasures each year. Without Bill S-14, we will lose a precious part of our natural history and marine culture.

This bill's purpose is to preserve and protect our heritage lighthouses in three ways: first, by providing for the selection and the designation of heritage lighthouses; second, by preventing their unauthorized alteration or disposition through a process that allows for public consultation; and third, by requiring that heritage lighthouses be reasonably maintained.

Current legislation gives two federal government bodies the power to select and designate heritage lighthouses, the Federal Heritage Building Review Office and the Historic Sites and Monuments Board. However, under the current legislation, more lighthouses are being rejected than are being protected. Only 19, or 3%, of our lighthouses across Canada have genuine heritage protection. Only 101, or 12%, have partial protection. In the U.S.A., 70% of lighthouses that are over 50 years of age have heritage protection.

Also, in the current system the public has no right to participate in the process of selecting or designating heritage lighthouses.

Currently there are no provisions to ensure that these structures are adequately protected. In fact those who maintain our operating lighthouses do not have a mandate to protect culturally significant lighthouses.

Bill S-14 addresses all of these issues. The appropriate minister will have the authority to recommend to the governor in council that a lighthouse be designated as a heritage lighthouse. In its deliberations the governor in council must give the public an opportunity to make representations about the heritage designation of that lighthouse. The bill also ensures public participation in this process by allowing the public to submit petitions on its own to propose heritage designation for any lighthouse.

Finally, the bill prohibits anyone from altering or disposing of a heritage lighthouse without the authorization from the minister and without giving the public notice of his or her intentions. The owner of a heritage lighthouse must also maintain it in a reasonable state of repair in a manner in keeping with its heritage character.

This bill not only ensures that lighthouses will continue to be an integral part of our Canadian heritage, it has the potential to create opportunities and partnerships with local communities.

● (1950)

By having the ability to participate in a lighthouse's designation and future, the local communities have the opportunity to incorporate lighthouses into their lives as potential interpretive centres or tourist destinations. Thus, this bill will allow lighthouses to become part of the larger social fabric. It is important for Canadians to be able to take part in determining what they believe is important to our country's history and cultural heritage.

I am encouraged by the provisions in Bill S-14 that allow for such full public involvement. It is Canadians who should determine what is important as monuments to our country's history. Without this bill we will lose too many lighthouses to natural deterioration, wilful destruction and neglect. We must take this step to preserve and protect our heritage for future generations. If we do not, we will lose the structures that have become icons in our history, such as the lighthouses, railway properties and grain elevators.

As the hon. Senator Pat Carney stated in 2002, this bill was modelled after Canada's Heritage Railway Stations Protection Act and it will strengthen our heritage archival asset base for generations to come. Senator Carney also pointed out that there is nothing currently in place to ensure that heritage status will also cover the historic dwellings or equipment that are integral to the heritage value of the lighthouse site. This legislation does so.

This legislation also has other benefits. The bill works within the existing system so it does not create any new bureaucracy or programs. There will also be a uniform set of standards and criteria within which the assessment of the significance of a heritage site will be determined.

As I have said, Canada has roughly 500 lighthouses across the country. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has indicated that over time about 200 lighthouses may become surplus to its operational requirements. This shows that this bill is truly important to Canada and its historical heritage. We must act now to ensure that a significant part of our country's past is saved and preserved.

I ask all members of the House to support Bill S-14, an act to protect heritage lighthouses.

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words in this very important debate. I understand I will not have my full allotment of time, so I will try to be as brief as I can.

Like the member opposite, I certainly appreciate the role that lighthouses have played in Canadian history, in the province of Nova Scotia, throughout Atlantic Canada and indeed throughout Canada. These are very important institutions.

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I come from Prince Edward Island. Lighthouses have been part of the landscape there for generations and generations. In Prince Edward Island there are 14 lighthouses that have either been classified or recognized by the federal heritage review board as essential symbols of Canada's heritage.

There are a number of themes emerging from tonight's debate regarding lighthouses. First, there are surplus lighthouses. Because of the change in technology, both land based and in vessels, a lot of lighthouses are no longer needed for navigational purposes. The second theme emerging is that Canadians from coast to coast to coast are very emotionally attached to the lighthouses along our coasts. Lighthouses have attained what I suggest is a mythical role in our lives and quite rightly so.

I urge anyone who plans on going to Prince Edward Island this summer to visit the lighthouse at West Point.

I should also point out on behalf of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans that there has been some divestitures and excellent opportunities. The department just does not have the financial flexibility to invest in lighthouse maintenance beyond what is required for strictly operational reasons.

It is the view of the minister and my view as well that this legislation should be referred to committee and hopefully, because of the financial constraints, a common sense solution will be sought and developed by the committee members. For that reason we will be supporting Bill S-14.

• (1955)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

* * *

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed certain bills, to which the concurrence of this House is desired.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to follow up on a question I asked on February 18 about museum funding. It is interesting to note that this would come up at this time because we have just spent the last hour talking about heritage lighthouses across Canada. Now we will be talking about another aspect of our heritage.

I was alarmed when I came across statistics in Heritage Canada that showed that Quebec receives 37% of all federal museum

funding and the province of Nova Scotia, part of which I represent, receives just a little over 1%. I could not believe this was the case. Quebec received 59 individual grants last year while Nova Scotia only received four. The statistics are about the same for the year before.

When I previously asked the minister my question she said that some provinces, such as Ontario and Quebec where several national museums are located, required greater support.

I take total exception to that. It is simply not fair that one province gets 37% of all program funding for museums. It would not be fair for one province to get 37% of funding for anything but especially not for museums.

Even though the minister said that Ontario and Quebec have important historic facilities, I beg to differ. Nova Scotia shares some of the oldest parts of our federation. We share history from the French, the Acadians, the English and our first nations peoples throughout the whole province. We have dozens of museums and heritage sites that deserve just as much attention and just as much from the federal budget as the province of Quebec. Nova Scotia has a unique seagoing heritage. We have shipbuilding throughout the province of Nova Scotia, which is unique.

In my riding, in which there is a lighthouse, Spencers Island is the community where the *Mary Celeste* ship was built. This ship was found sailing on the sea with all its sails up and all the tables set but nobody was on board. It has been well documented in the Age of Sail Museum which is also in my riding. This museum is manned by volunteers who do an incredible job of gathering up information reflecting the history of the area. They have captured it well. This museum is one example of the 33 museums in my riding, and it is a dandy. I take my hat off to the people and the volunteers who work so hard to make the museum a success.

After I raised the question in the House, I had a visit from officials from Heritage Canada. They explained that this funding was demand driven and so on but I still say there is something very wrong with the system when one province receives 37% of the funding and my province of Nova Scotia receives 1% of the funding. There is no justification for that. If it is application driven, then Heritage Canada is doing more to obtain applications from Quebec than from Nova Scotia and the other provinces.

I will continue to push on this issue. Perhaps I could get a clarification on why one province receives 37% of the heritage funding for museums while Nova Scotia receives 1%.

• (2000)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to clarify that. Just before I do I would like to pay tribute to Kelly, Leslie and Brian who are in Ottawa today from my constituency in Yukon.

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The government is very proud of its commitment to arts and heritage. In 1972 it announced its first ever federal museum policy and as a part of that policy, created the museums assistance program. Today there are 2,500 museums and related heritage institutions across the country. They range from the tiniest historical societies entirely staffed by volunteers in areas like mine in Yukon to the largest institutions with encyclopedic collections and international reputations.

The museums assistance program is focused on projects being undertaken by those institutions that operate year round on a professional basis. The program has three components under which museums and service organizations can apply for project support: access in national outreach, aboriginal museum development and organizational development.

Applications to the program are first reviewed by program staff for compliance with program requirements. Following that, applications are reviewed by peer committees, committees composed of professionals drawn from the museum community itself. Like most programs in government, the museums assistance program receives more applications than it can fund each year and applications are therefore judged on comparative merit.

The role of peer review committees is to provide objective external assessment of the merits of projects and the extent to which they meet the criteria that have been established for the program. These criteria are not mysterious. They are included in the program guidelines that are posted on the website of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

The number of applications submitted by museums in different regions varies considerably. For example, in 2004-05 six applications for new projects were received from Nova Scotia museums and related organizations and 94 applications were submitted by Quebec museums. Following a review of the applications, two-thirds of the Nova Scotia applications were approved and two-thirds of Quebec applications were approved.

In 2003-04 seven new projects were submitted in Nova Scotia and they were all approved. An additional multi-year project approved the previous year was also funded, bringing the total to eight. Ninety-four per cent of the total funding requested for the seven new projects was approved. By contrast, only 73% of Quebec projects were approved that year and they accounted for only 24% of the total funding requested by institutions in that province.

In 2002-03 three new projects were submitted in Nova Scotia and again they were all approved together with the second year funding for a previously approved project. Based on the record, eligible museums in Nova Scotia that submit applications have an excellent chance of having their projects approved.

There are many reasons for the differences in the number of applications the Department of Canadian Heritage receives in the different provinces and territories. It is important to remember that not all museums in the country are professionally managed and thus meet the eligibility criteria for MAP.

To meet the level of professional practice required by the program, museums must have ongoing local support. Different municipalities in provinces and territories provide different levels of support and

there are variations in the percentage of professionally managed museums. One component of the program is dedicated to aboriginal heritage. Obviously the demand for that component will be higher where there are more aboriginal people.

It is important to note that the Government of Canada does not provide 100% of the costs associated with the projects. Museum related organizations must find other sources and this is easier in some areas than others.

The criteria for the program is open and transparent. The rules apply across the country and I can assure the member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley that Nova Scotia museums are treated fairly under these rules.

Mr. Bill Casey: Mr. Speaker, I too would like to welcome Kelly, Leslie and Brian to Ottawa if they are here. We certainly want to make them feel welcome.

Just in rough numbers, Quebec has seven times the population of Nova Scotia, but it gets thirty times the museum funding. That is not right and it is not acceptable.

I do not know whether the Department of Canadian Heritage has skewed the regulations and the criteria to favour Quebec or what, but it does not make sense, it is not fair and it is not acceptable for Quebec to have 37% of the funding and Nova Scotia to have 1%. It has thirty times the funding and seven times the population. Something is wrong.

I would put my volunteer museums and their quality up against any professional museum in the country in management and the ability of the curator to bring in quality displays that reflect our heritage and history. I do not see any reason why those Nova Scotia museums—

• (2005)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, as I said, a majority of Nova Scotia applications and a higher percentage were approved in Quebec. I would just like to improve on the positive assistance that this program provides to Yukon, Nova Scotia, Quebec and across the country. It plays a very important part in the quality of the nation's cultural life.

While the Government of Canada makes its greatest investment in museums, as the steward of national collections, it also recognizes that all across the country our collective memory finds a home in museums.

Through the program, project funding is provided to non-federal and related institutions. Some projects, such as the program for Nova Scotia heritage, benefit all the museums in the province.

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With the support of the museums assistance program, the federation is currently implementing an education strategy to strengthen the capabilities of museums in Nova Scotia and target key priorities for community museums.

In closing, to paraphrase the words of the great Nova Scotian Joseph Howe, "A wise nation preserves its records...and fosters national pride and love of country". The MAP ensures that tradition continues.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask the government to give an account regarding the compassionate care program.

As we know, the compassionate care program is a program that was established and announced in the Speech from the Throne in 2002 and again in the budget speech of the following year. It has been with us for about two years now. It is there to provide financial assistance, EI benefits, to those who qualify and those who have a dying family member, so that they can spend the last six weeks of the life of that dying person providing compassionate care. It is a program that is built on the right premise but, unfortunately, the government has to give an answer, hopefully tonight, why it is not implementing that in a fair and compassionate way.

I have a 43-year-old woman in my riding of Langely who is dying. Her sister, Sue, had been taking care of her mother. Then she became diagnosed with cancer. Her sister came down from the Okanagan to take care of her and applied for compassionate care. As I said, it is a program for family members to take care of loved ones. Sue's family was told that her sister did not qualify for this program because the government did not consider a sister or a brother a member of the family. The family members were devastated by that news and they appealed it.

Since I brought this to the attention of this House, we have found numerous Canadians who have had the same treatment from the government, where it has said, "No, sorry, you're not going to be able to have that compassionate care. Sisters and brothers do not qualify. They are not considered family".

We even had a dying woman whose sister-in-law was denied the compassionate care. She had no family left. Her husband and children had died. The sister-in-law was the only one to provide the care and the government said no.

We brought this to the attention of the minister in January. It will take about four months, by regulation, to make the changes. Actually, I am asking to let the dying person choose who is going to provide that care. The government has had ample time to solve this problem, to fix the legislation, and it keeps refusing.

We have been told that it is under review. So I asked to meet with the persons who were doing the review. I met with them last week and was told that they were aware of these problems and that the minister had the discretion to start the proceedings to fix the problem. The question is, why is the minister not doing anything?

Almost every week, I talk to the minister and I ask, "Are you going to do something now?" And it is always the same answer, "I'll deal with it when I want to deal with it". These people do not have

an unlimited amount of time for the government to dither. These people are dying and they need a loving one to take care of them. When will the government do the right thing?

The appeal board is called the board of referees. It made a decision which said:

The Board finds that there is no compassion in a piece of legislation that would not specifically prescribe a sibling to be a family member—

This Board believes that the failure of the Commission and the Minister to act swiftly in these matters of Compassionate Care amendments has only served to exacerbate the suffering endured by families as they care for a dying family member.

The Board believes the Minister and the Commission, in their failure to act urgently to rectify the inadequacies of the Compassionate Care legislation, can be viewed as being neglectful of the trust reposed in them.

I have met with the chairs of these boards of appeal. Both chairs are criticizing the government. Everybody is waiting. When will the government do the right thing?

• (2010)

Hon. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the hon. member. I truly welcome the fact that he has asked for an adjournment debate on this issue. I have followed his interest in this particular matter, a matter that is of interest to all of us as members of Parliament who see these terrible personal situations from time to time.

I welcome the debate because it is important that members of the House and all Canadians understand the government's commitment to ensuring that Canadian workers are not forced to choose between their jobs and caring for their family during a serious medical crisis. That is why the compassionate care program was introduced. Let me remind members that our compassionate care benefit was introduced only last year to help Canadian workers face these tragic situations.

I have to emphasize that even though our program was introduced only last year, Canada is a leader in the international scene in the area of compassionate benefits.

While some countries have income support measures for these types of situations, most are restricted to parents caring for sick children. For example, Denmark and Portugal integrate the provision of income replacement for parents caring for seriously ill or sick children into broader regimes of sickness benefits.

Some jurisdictions in the United States offer unpaid leave to eligible workers, but no income support. The State of California offers six weeks of paid family leave insurance benefits under its state disability insurance. This paid leave is for individuals who take time off work to care for a seriously ill child, spouse, parent or domestic partner. It can also be used to bond with a new child, the equivalent of our EI parental benefits.

The vast majority of Canadians facing these types of crises are caring for a spouse, a parent or a child. These benefits ensure that eligible workers can take a temporary leave of absence from work to provide care or support to a gravely ill child, spouse or parent who has a significant risk of death.

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The six weeks of benefits can be shared among family members and can be taken consecutively, concurrently or one week at a time by family members over a 26 week period. This is a flexible program. This provides families with greater choices that will contribute to the care and the quality of care for gravely ill Canadians. The six week benefit was found to represent a balanced approach that would meet the needs of Canadian families and establish a sound foundation for a compassionate care benefit.

An evaluation is being conducted this year. Part of this evaluation will include an assessment of the adequacy and scope of the benefits.

The member should also know that a policy review is now under way which will assess the benefit parameters in a comprehensive way, including the range of family relationships currently recognized under the benefit. The member's points and arguments will be taken into account in that review, which is taking place the year after the benefit was introduced, so it is not a long time. This would direct any program adjustments in the next few months.

Any amendment to the recognized relationships under the compassionate care benefit program is done through regulation. The process for regulatory change takes at least six months in a still new program.

The government is committed to remain a world leader in the area of compassionate care. It is a sound management practice to evaluate any program after a year or so. We have started a full evaluation of a program that has been in operation for a year. Amendments will be based upon that evaluation.

• (2015)

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, this is the third fiscal year that we are in regarding compassionate care. It is not a brand new program.

The review has been going on for a year now. The appeal board said that the minister needs to review this issue as an urgent and critical matter because time is sensitive.

This is an example of why Canadians have lost trust in the government: empty promises and empty words instead of action.

These people cannot wait. The government cut the funding from \$191 million last year to \$11 million this year. That is the type of review that the Liberals are doing: empty and broken promises.

When will the minister do the right thing and bring about the changes? The review board staff said she has the discretion to do that. We are waiting for her. When will she do it? I get empty answers. Something has to happen and it has to happen now. When will it happen?

Hon. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I must repeat that Canada is one of the very few countries in the world to offer compassionate care benefits for workers. This is still a very new field and Canada is leading in it.

I am very sensitive to the ramifications of cases of compassionate care which could exist out there, but proper management requires that we run this program as we are doing now and that we assess it fully as we are doing now before making considerable changes to it.

The policy review is underway. It is dealing with a number of issues. As I mentioned, those issues include, and because of the work of this member, the range of family relationships including siblings currently recognized by the benefits.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 8:17 p.m.)

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Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

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