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Chair

Mr. Dean Allison

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• (0905)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC)): Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), we're going to be looking at the main estimates today.

I'd like to welcome everybody. We have the minister here to answer questions. I know that Minister Solberg will have some opening statements.

The first round will be seven minutes, followed by a second round of five minutes.

I believe, Minister, you're here for the full two hours. I know the committee is very excited about the prospect of having you for two hours. I don't think there's anything else we need to cover at this point in time, so Minister, please start with your opening remarks.

Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning everyone. *Bonjour.*

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before this committee to talk about the 2008-09 main estimates and the report on plans and priorities of my department.

Of the more than \$87 billion in planned expenditures for my department, as noted in our 2008-09 report on plans and priorities, in excess of 94% will be in direct benefits to Canadians for child care, student support, skills development, old age security, employment insurance, and the Canada Pension Plan. The latter two, employment insurance and the Canada Pension Plan, account for approximately \$45.5 billion of these total planned expenditures.

The 2008-09 main estimates total of \$40.6 billion represents a net increase of \$186.5 million over those from 2007-08 in the amount of \$40.4 billion. The increase is primarily owing to changes arising from new funding for the labour market strategy for the implementation of the new labour market architecture to enhance the participation among under-represented groups and low-skilled workers; new funding for the aboriginal skills and employment partnership, the apprenticeship incentive grant, and the new horizons for seniors program;

[Translation]

increases in funding for statutory programs, including Old Age Security, Guaranteed Income Supplement and Allowance Payments; and

[English]

and new funding for administering programs, such as the temporary foreign worker program, to improve timeliness and responsiveness in services.

Mr. Chair, as minister of this portfolio, I've had the opportunity to see the positive effects it has on Canadians. Through such supports and measures as the apprenticeship incentive grant, the Canada education savings grant, the Canada learning bond, new labour market agreements with provinces, and the homelessness partnering strategy, we are making real inroads in improving the quality of life for Canadians. In the coming year, we will be building on these accomplishments by continuing to support children and families through the universal child care plan. The plan includes the universal child care benefit as well as transfers to provinces and territories and other measures to create child care spaces.

We will also continue to support vulnerable Canadians so they can break free from poverty. We will focus on addressing accessibility issues for people with disabilities by implementing the registered disability savings plan and the enabling accessibility fund so that all Canadians, regardless of physical ability, can participate fully in their communities.

[Translation]

We will also emphasize support for low-income seniors and prevent elder abuse through improvements to the Guaranteed Income Supplement and the New Horizons for Seniors Program.

[English]

With respect to helping Canadians break free from poverty, I've talked with my colleague Tony Martin about the committee's poverty study, and I'm glad that it's under way. I am hoping the committee can offer concrete, workable proposals based on solid indicators that will aid in informing our policies.

I also want to thank you for your study on employability in Canada. Your goal to increase Canada's supply of skilled workers is one that's highly complementary to the government's plan in Advantage Canada, which seeks to create the best educated, most skilled, and most flexible workforce in the world. Indeed, this is particularly important in meeting the challenges of slower labour force growth and the prospect of growing skills shortages now and in the years ahead.

[Translation]

I should also note that this government has taken steps to support many issues raised in the report. For example, we committed significant investments to support skills development, post-secondary education and immigrants, among other things.

[English]

I firmly believe, and I know that many of you do as well, that the best path out of poverty is giving people the opportunity to gain the skills, training, and education to get a good, well-paying job. In order to do this, we need to remove the barriers to participation in the workforce. Certainly there is a need for skilled workers. A 2006 PricewaterhouseCoopers survey found that more than 60% of companies believed a shortage of qualified workers is slowing their growth. This is happening across Canada.

Numbers have been released from several sources. The Province of British Columbia currently estimates a shortfall of 350,000 workers by 2018. Alberta Human Resources and Employment says Alberta faces a potential shortfall of 100,000 workers by 2018. The Conference Board of Canada says Ontario will be short 190,000 workers by 2020. Emploi-Québec says Quebec could see 700,000 job openings by 2011. Last year in New Brunswick, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business said that province had 17,000 job vacancies. We also know a resource boom is starting in New Brunswick, and the Benefits Blueprint community initiative predicts that will create another 33,000 jobs over the next 10 years.

According to my department's report *Looking-Ahead: A 10-Year Outlook for the Canadian Labour Market (2006-2015)*, about 5.5 million job openings are expected across the country. Every region and every province shares this trend. The *Looking-Ahead* report confirms what is widely known: labour shortages exist in many industries, many skills, and many occupations. This mismatch costs us dearly as a nation. Jobs without people represent income not being generated.

The report reaffirms the need for a better match between supply and demand to ensure that new workers have the skills to do these jobs. This is an enormous challenge for our country, but an enormous opportunity for under-represented groups such as aboriginal Canadians, people with disabilities, and recent immigrants to participate more fully in the labour market. Building a knowledge advantage will be a primary focus of Human Resources and Social Development Canada to address labour market challenges and opportunities.

Seventy percent of the jobs of the future will require some form of post-secondary education. Budget 2008 enables the creation of a new Canada student grant program that will make post-secondary education more affordable to low- and middle-income students. The

budget also adapts the Canada student loans program to help those with special circumstances to access post-secondary education. It will offer improved support for part-time students and improved measures to suit their needs, the needs of low-income students, students with children, and people with permanent disabilities.

Learning can also occur on the work site. That is why we have more than doubled the size of the aboriginal skills and employment partnership, a flourishing workplace training partnership among government, aboriginal peoples, and business. Budget 2008 committed to establish a new framework for aboriginal economic development by the end of 2008, supported by \$70 million over the next two years for aboriginal economic development measures. We are seeing some strong results through aboriginal skills employment programs on this front and we want to build on those. At the same time as we work on the development of the new framework, the government will continue to engage aboriginal groups and other stakeholders in a successor approach to the aboriginal human resources development strategy expected in 2009. The new approach will better place the skills and training available for individuals in the context of employer and labour market demands. We will continue to work with my colleague Minister Strahl to deliver on these commitments to address the needs of Canada's aboriginal people.

From meeting with the Construction Sector Council, I am aware that the skilled trades need to be replenished by new entrants. Our new apprenticeship incentive grant is helping more people enter the skilled trades and progress through the early years of their apprenticeship in one of the Red Seal trades.

I know the committee is well informed on the targeted initiative for older workers. Our additional \$90 million in funding to extend the initiative until 2012 should go a long way in assisting these capable and experienced workers aged 55 to 64 to improve their employability through skills upgrading or experiencing new fields of work. Under current funding, 63 projects have been approved and are assisting some 2,800 older workers to remain productive in the labour force.

We also support low-income working Canadians, the working poor, through the working income tax benefit. In 2008, this benefit provides up to \$510 per year for individuals and \$1,019 for couples and single parents at a cost of \$550 million per year.

• (0910)

For unemployed Canadians, employment insurance benefits provide the first line of response. Our government continues to invest more than \$2 billion per year in active employment measures under part II of the EI act. We have also taken important steps, through budget 2008, to improve the governance and management of the employment insurance account.

In the Budget Implementation Act, we are proposing to establish the Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board, which will implement an improved EI premium rate-setting mechanism to ensure that EI revenues and expenditures break even over time. The board will also be managing a new bank account, separate from the government's general revenues, where any excess EI premiums from a given year will be held and invested until they are used to reduce premium rates in subsequent years. The government will provide \$2 billion to establish a real cash reserve, which the board will maintain.

Of course the Government of Canada and the existing Employment Insurance Commission will continue to have full responsibility related to EI benefits and program delivery, including eligibility and benefit levels.

We are also working with the provinces and territories to help more Canadians who are not eligible for EI to participate in the labour market. To date, we have signed five labour market agreements with the provinces. This goes a long way to fulfilling last year's budget pledge to invest \$500 million annually over the next six years to help more Canadians to enter the labour market. These agreements will provide access to employment services and training for individuals who have little or no work experience, including aboriginal people, immigrants, and Canadians with disabilities.

• (0915)

[*Translation*]

In light of the current period of low unemployment and labour market shortages, vulnerable groups may have more opportunities to increase their labour market participation. We value their participation and contributions.

[*English*]

Today's seniors are living longer and healthier lives. Their participation in the labour force is growing. In recognition of this new reality, budget 2008 invested \$60 million per year to ensure that low-income seniors who work can realize greater benefits from their earnings through an increase in the guaranteed income supplement earnings exemption.

[*Translation*]

In addition, Budget 2008 announced funding of \$13 million over three years to raise awareness of elder abuse and to assist seniors in dealing with this difficult issue. This investment will support an awareness-raising campaign that will seek to help seniors and others recognize the signs and symptoms of elder abuse in order to seek the assistance they may require.

[*English*]

This investment builds on the work of the National Seniors Council as it travelled across Canada over the past few months listening to experts and community stakeholders. The National Seniors Council, established by our government in May 2007, continues to consult with Canadians on the needs of our aging population.

Finally, we recognize the connection between homelessness and mental health disorders; therefore, budget 2008 announced funding of \$110 million to the Mental Health Commission of Canada. The funding will support projects in Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, and Moncton. This government is investing more on affordable and supportive housing than any other government in Canada's history. At more than \$2.7 billion annually, federal spending on housing has never been higher. As you know, we need to make a decision on affordable housing programs by March 2009. We are also talking to people across Canada to learn their views on what works and what can be improved. We will also continue our dialogue with the provinces and territories on these issues, which concern all of us.

[*Translation*]

I have recently been travelling across the country meeting with business and labour leaders, workers and academics to gain a better understanding of how we can improve skills and fill jobs, and to make a difference in the lives of Canadians.

[*English*]

I think it is critical to move the Budget Implementation Act forward because there is a lot at stake for students, seniors, and other Canadians, including employers. To be precise, our goal is to implement the guaranteed income supplement earnings exemption, the monthly grants for eligible students from low- and middle-income families, and the improvements to the management and governance of the EI account.

I would be pleased to address the committee's questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

I believe we're going to start now with the Liberal Party, and we have Ms. Dhalla, for seven minutes, please.

• (0920)

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.): Thank you, Minister, for taking the time to come before the committee today.

I want to speak in regard to an issue that I think is important to many Canadian families, single parents, and children across this country, and that is the issue of child care. We know that in 1991 Canada ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 2 of that convention prohibits discrimination of any kind. It says that equitable provision is to be provided, both resources and services, for children. It is one of the core principles stated within the convention, and I think it is a core value for many Canadians.

There was an analysis done by Ken Battle of the Caledon Institute on the new program that the Conservative government introduced of a universal child care benefit, also known as the UCCB. I think all of us around this table know that the \$100 was provided to provide a choice for families, for their children. It was quickly discovered that after that \$100 was actually put in, after taxes were considered, families were given about \$60. And regardless of whether a family was making \$100,000 or \$10,000, they were getting that same \$100 supplement. But the family that was making \$100,000 a year was actually getting more benefit, despite the fact that a family or a single parent living in poverty would actually have more challenges in regard to child care.

The Senate then did a report called “Children: The Silenced Citizens” in April 2007. The government issued a response in regard to that. In the response it was stated that the department uses the agreement that was ratified at the Convention on the Rights of the Child to analyze all legislation that pertains or impacts children and Canada’s obligations under the convention in regard to the rights of the child.

My question is, was an assessment done in regard to the UCCB in light of the fact that it does discriminate against families? We have a national report card that was issued by many child care organizations across this country, which I’m sure you had a chance to take a look at. I am just quoting from it. It states: “The Universal Child Care Plan isn’t universal—it’s taxable. It’s not child care—it’s unaccountable. There is no plan to expand and improve early learning and child care in Canada” by this Conservative government.

My question, Minister, would be this. Was an assessment done, and could you please provide a copy to the committee of that particular assessment in regard to the UCCB?

Hon. Monte Solberg: First of all, Mr. Chairman, I want to thank Ms. Dhalla for the question. I appreciate the chance to talk a bit about the universal child care benefit and about child care in general. This is a very important issue, and I think we all appreciate how important child care is for Canadian families.

It’s true we brought in the UCCB because we did want to not only offer people choice but help them with the cost of child care. The UCCB has helped to lift 25,000 families out of poverty and has lifted them above the poverty line. In those families there are over 55,000 children, as I recall. So it does have an impact on helping people escape poverty.

That’s the first point I would make, and that’s part of my assessment of the benefit of the UCCB.

The second point I would make is that the UCCB allows people who have different situations that can’t be addressed by child care to make different choices. And really there are many people in the

country who are in that situation—people who work shift work; people who live in rural areas of the country; or people who simply make the decision because of their own values, or because it’s simply what works best for them, to look after their children at home. So the UCCB is a huge help to them.

I would point out, as a matter of fact, that the UCCB is taxable in the hands of the lowest-income parent, so for many families there is no tax at all on the UCCB. I think it’s important to lay that out.

Secondly, we’ve increased support for regulated child care spaces by \$250 million. That amount will rise over a period of years. It’s now \$1.1 billion a year, rising to \$1.3 billion a year over a period of years.

In addition to that, we’ve put in place a new tax credit that will help businesses and employers create child care spaces. That was just passed through the House at the beginning of December. We’re seeing some interest from companies that want to start to offer that to their employees.

● (0925)

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: Can you provide the committee with a copy of the assessment, please, if it was done by the department?

Secondly, you’re talking about giving parents choice. Parents are getting \$60 a month, which translates to about \$2 a day. I know that in my riding of Brampton—Springdale and many other ridings across this country, 53% of children are in non-parental care arrangements—in day cares. They can’t find spaces, and they cannot find day care for \$2 a day. We need to ensure that we provide these families.... We owe it to Canadians to ensure that we have quality, universal, accessible, and affordable child care. We must invest in our children to ensure the success of our country.

Hon. Monte Solberg: Thank you, Ms. Dhalla.

We know from our own information that this has been extraordinarily helpful to many Canadian families. It has lifted a number of families out of poverty. I can provide you with that information.

The other point I would make is that since we invested in child care in the 2007 budget, the provinces and territories have announced their intention to create over 60,000 new child care spaces. So that investment is having an impact when it comes to regulated child care.

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Minister, it’s good to see you here.

I want to ask you a question about the transition from the Millennium Scholarship Foundation to the Canada student grants program, leaving aside the ideology of the move. In the first year, \$350 million will go into this. Millennium was kicking off at about \$350 million. What is the status of the Canada study grants and the Canada access grants?

Hon. Monte Solberg: When we make the transition, people who are currently receiving support under the CMSF will continue to get that funding until their studies are done. So those grants will continue.

Mr. Michael Savage: Is that in addition to the \$350 million?

Hon. Monte Solberg: Yes, we're actually increasing it. Over the period of time that the new Canada student grants are put in place, the funding will go up.

Mr. Michael Savage: I understand that, but the Canada study grants and the Canada access grants totalled about \$140 million. The millennium fund was \$350 million and the new program is \$350 million. What happens to the Canada access grants and the Canada study grants money?

Hon. Monte Solberg: The overall funding is going up.

Mr. Michael Savage: It's not going up; it's \$350 million.

Hon. Monte Solberg: I'm sorry, I'm not...

Mr. Michael Savage: It's \$350 million, according to the budget, for the new Canada student grants program.

Hon. Monte Solberg: What am I missing here? I'm sorry. We're providing more funding overall so we can provide the new student grants and support people who are currently receiving CMSF funding under the old system. I guess you're talking about funding for the study grants. People who are currently receiving extra support will not lose that support. In fact, under the new programming the support will go up for people who have extra needs.

Mr. Michael Savage: It does not go up. It goes down to \$2,000 from \$3,000 in a needs-based system.

Hon. Monte Solberg: What we're doing under the student grant

Mr. Michael Savage: Does it not go down from \$3,000 to \$2,000?

Hon. Monte Solberg: Under the new program, all three of these will be rolled together.

Mr. Michael Savage: But there will be less money.

I may have to come back to that, Chair.

Hon. Monte Solberg: There won't be less money.

Mr. Michael Savage: According to the budget book, there will be less money because it's consolidated in the \$350 million, which is equivalent to what the millennium fund was kicking off. But there were also the Canada study grants and the Canada access grants, which were about \$140 million. So where has that \$140 million gone?

The Chair: I'm going to ask if we can come back to that in the next round. We're over time and will move on to the next round.

Mr. Lessard, you have seven minutes, sir.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to start by welcoming the minister as well as the officials who are accompanying him. We will get straight to the point, since we have a very limited amount of time.

Mr. Minister, the Expert Panel on Older Workers submitted its report in February, I believe. The report followed a series of consultations that the panel conducted more or less across the country. In Quebec, groups specifically emphasized the need to implement a program like the POWA to assist older workers.

Have you familiarized yourself with this report? What is your position on it? Do you plan to submit a copy to the committee so that we can familiarize ourselves with it and continue our work?

• (0930)

[English]

Hon. Monte Solberg: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman, yes, we are. We have received the report. We're analyzing it now, and we will be releasing it in due course. This work is important. I know you're very interested in the situation for older workers in this country, and we'll be responding to that report in due course. Certainly this committee will have the chance to look at it.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Since the POWA was abolished in 1997 and, for my part, for the past four years that I have been here, we have been calling for this program to be re-established. The project has been delayed several times, despite your political party having committed to it.

As minister, do you plan to re-establish the Program for Older Worker Adjustment? I am distinguishing it from the TIOW, which is a training program for those who can be reclassified. I am referring to workers who cannot be reclassified.

[English]

Hon. Monte Solberg: Our approach is to try to find a way to give older workers the opportunity to retrain if they possibly can. There are a couple of factors. Given that many older workers do want to retrain, and that people are generally living longer than they used to and our social programs don't necessarily reflect that fact, we think it's important to give people that option. The labour market is providing more and more opportunities for them—and I laid out some of those numbers in my remarks.

So my answer is that we are going to continue to put our emphasis and our resources into helping retrain older workers as much as we can.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Mr. Minister, you know as well as I do that some people cannot be retrained. Those are the people we are talking about, and you know that. You always talk about a program for those people who want to and can be retrained. I'm talking about those people who cannot, Mr. Minister. I will ask you the question again. Do you plan to provide support for these people?

[English]

Hon. Monte Solberg: I would point out that there are already supports in place for older workers who are in that position. If it's somebody who's suffered a disability, we have supports for them. We have the ability for people to draw Canada Pension Plan early, at age 60. We also have put in place the community development trust, which will help people in extraordinary situations in communities where there aren't options to be creative and offer new ideas, as determined by the province. And obviously the provinces, in some cases, make the decision to step in and provide income support for people who are older.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Thank you for being brief. I don't think we will agree on that. You know what I am talking about and once again you are passing the burden on to the provinces. That is regrettable, but we will have an opportunity to come back to that.

Now let's talk about the new agency that will manage the Employment Insurance Account. You have provided some clarification on that. You plan to maintain the Employment Insurance Commission and create an agency. The commission will ensure that benefits are paid in accordance with decisions made by the minister and will provide sound management. As for the agency, it will look after establishing premiums.

What troubles me a great deal is the clarification that you made when you said the agency's mandate will involve holding and investing any excess EI premiums from a given year until they are used to reduce premium rates in subsequent years.

Mr. Minister, don't you feel that it is irresponsible to say ahead of time that the employment insurance system will not be improved and that the board's only responsibility will be to manage premiums in order to reduce them? Can you clarify that for us? That statement is quite unsettling.

[English]

Hon. Monte Solberg: Mr. Lessard, actually the most important job that the Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board will have is to ensure that those premiums are used only for what they were intended, which is to provide benefits for employees. That's the most important job that the new financing board will have. This is not an insubstantial job. Remember that \$14 billion a year passes through there. That money has to be handled correctly, and ultimately workers and employers have to have the confidence that it's going for uses that it was originally intended for.

Remember that a lot of people have lost faith in the system to some degree, because in the past well over \$50 billion went through there and was utilized for things that had nothing to do with supplying benefits for workers.

• (0935)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Mr. Minister, I am happy to hear you say that \$55 billion were utilized for other things. I will come back to that.

You yourself made a distinction between the mandate of the commission and the mandate of the board. But your answer about the board deals with the commission's mandate. I will give you an

opportunity to check your notes, because your answer is not consistent with them.

I want to go back to the \$54 billion that were used for other purposes. When the Bloc Québécois introduced Bill C-280 on repatriating the surpluses that had been diverted from the account, which today are at \$54 billion, your party's House leader, Mr. Van Loan, who was a member of the committee, proposed returning that \$54 billion to the account. That amount, however, is not in the present budget.

Do you intend to honour the committee's unanimous recommendation? Will you also respect the motion that had been presented by Mr. Van Loan to amend Bill C-280?

[English]

The Chair: Minister, that's all the time we have, but I'll let you answer this question before we move on to the next round.

Hon. Monte Solberg: Obviously the \$54 billion has been spent. To bring it back would require poking a \$54 billion hole in the budget, which would obviously not be acceptable to many people.

I think our job is to fix the problem going forward. We can't do anything about what has occurred in the past. We can fix the problem going forward. I think we have made a very good start at that—a \$2 billion cash reserve and ensuring that no government ever again in the future can take money away from workers and from employers who put that money into the fund with the understanding that it would be used to provide benefits for workers. I think that's the most important thing we can do, and I think that's what we're really doing with this new fund.

So far we've received tremendous support from groups that represent workers across the country, including unions, and of course from small business. They are very excited that this may lead ultimately to lower premiums.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

We're now going to go to Mr. Martin, for seven minutes, sir.

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): Thank you very much.

It's good to see you again.

I appreciate the focus in the report this morning on the labour market approach to lifting people out of difficult times. However, the information I have so far is that Statistics Canada—reporting sometime this week, I think Thursday—is saying that what we're looking at is a seriousness of income inequality in Canada. We're failing a new generation of Canadian-born workers and immigrants, aged 18 to 34, who are not only not getting ahead but are falling further behind.

In an economic boom, as talk of a recession dominates, we see the richest 5% accumulating dramatically more wealth, incomes of most Canadians stagnating more than in incomes for people in any country in the developing world, and the poorest actually falling further behind because of that reality. This is very disturbing. Canadian-born youngest male adults and immigrants 18 to 34, according to the stats, are the prime victims of a 25-year trend of income inequality. You know this, because it was reported in your performance report of last year.

What steps are you taking to correct this, and how important is this income inequality to you?

• (0940)

Hon. Monte Solberg: There are, I think, a couple of issues with respect to incomes. One is inequality and the other is whether or not people on the low end are seeing any increase overall in their standard of living. I think both of them are important.

I guess I would say this: we are investing very heavily when it comes to training that will help people on the low end take advantage of the hot labour market. There is no question that there is concern in the economy right now. Some sectors are being adversely affected. But over the long run, because of demographics, I think a lot of people who are on the low end of the income scale will have opportunities.

In fact, our information shows that Canada is one of the most upwardly mobile countries in the world in terms of people who have a lower standard of living being able to rise up. That said, there is always a portion of the population that really struggles on the low end. My department has suggested that about 650,000 people in the country fit that description. Some of these people are mentally ill. Certainly there are homelessness issues, of course, and addiction issues.

I look forward to this committee producing a report on homelessness and poverty to help guide us on where we should go in the future to address some of those problems.

Mr. Tony Martin: Let me take this income inequality a step further to indicate to you what's apparently going to show up on Thursday.

The gap is growing. We are seeing the rich, the top 5%, driving up shelter prices beyond the reach of an increasing number of people in the country. It says in *The Toronto Star* that "economists have been buried by reports from Statistics Canada...showing income inequality to be on the rise". That isn't a surprise. What is a surprise is the analysis connecting the dots between incomes and shelter costs. More and more people will not have housing or adequate housing. This takes it even further, beyond a moral imperative to act. It says this situation may not be sustainable.

From what I can see, there is no new money. You've mentioned some money for housing in your report. But we can't find any new money, and we can't see any new housing starts. We don't see anything coming directly out of the federal government, certainly not in my community. I think the same is true in communities across the country. We need new housing starts, and this income inequality is going to make the problem even worse.

Hon. Monte Solberg: There's a lot in that. I would say this. We are spending about \$2.7 billion this year on affordable housing and homelessness, which is the highest amount ever. During the last two years we have spent more than ever before on these problems.

We understand that there are many people who are still struggling to find affordable housing. It's true that even as we experience general prosperity it's becoming more and more difficult for many people to realize the dream of owning a home. But this is a very complicated issue.

Remember, too, that the top 10% of income earners pay about 50% of the income taxes in this country. You have to tax people, and the expectation is that people on the high end should pay more in tax. But there's a fine line. If you tax them too heavily, they'll leave the country, because they're mobile. These are the very people who create jobs and are the solution for many people who want to make their way up the income scale. In losing people on the high end, you deny a lot of people that opportunity. So it is a fine line, and I think we need to be cautious about it.

We are concerned about people on the low end. That's why former Senator Kirby's Mental Health Commission and the \$110 million for demonstration projects are really important. I think it's one of the big ways to address the problem of poverty and homelessness and to find ways to help people who are mentally ill and deeply addicted. But it's complicated.

Mr. Tony Martin: I've travelled the country over the last couple of years, talking to groups and looking at poverty in the neighbourhoods of our major cities. One of the groups that show up most often is the aboriginal people. According to Stats Canada, aboriginal people make up the fastest growing demographic in Canada. I see programs in my own community that are underfunded and could be helpful in getting those young people into preschool and readiness programs, like Head Start. These programs could be working with families. Yet they're out there trying to run their programs on the proceeds of bake sales and car washes. We have Indian friendship centres, we have Head Start, we have a number of other excellent programs run by aboriginal people themselves. All of them, though, receive minuscule funding.

You talk about your colleague Minister Strahl. But they're not seeing any commitment to what is both a huge challenge and a wonderful opportunity for Canadians—to take advantage of this new, exciting group of people who are coming on stream and could be the future for us.

• (0945)

Hon. Monte Solberg: Everyone agrees that we have to find a way to make sure aboriginal Canadians play a more important role, that they can join the mainstream of society in this country. We're already seeing this to some degree. Today our workforce has a much higher participation rate for aboriginals off-reserve than in the past. That's because the economy is hot. We've taken some steps to take advantage of that, like the aboriginal skills employment program. In general, this government's philosophy is to fund things that we know work. That's why we doubled the size of ASEP. It works really well.

When it comes to some of the other training initiatives—and I'll speak about these because I'm familiar with them—we are concerned that they haven't worked as well as they could have. We owe it to taxpayers to make sure they work, and we owe it to vulnerable aboriginal people to make sure they work better than they do. So we are taking a hard, fundamental look at things like the aboriginal human resources development agreements. There are hundreds of these across this country, and we want to make sure they serve aboriginals better than they have up till now.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're out of time. Now we're going to move to the last individual of this round.

Ms. Yelich, you have seven minutes.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC): Thank you. I will be sharing my time with Jacques.

I want to congratulate the minister on his French. I am trying to learn French, and I'm still really shy. I hear him speak it so well, and we don't see Mr. Lessard miss a beat there. It was very good, and I congratulate you.

I could pick up on that, because Saskatchewan, of course, is an example that can be used. We definitely do have a growing population of aboriginals. A lot of the programs you have introduced are certainly going to be excellent. I'm sure that all of the aboriginal women who have children under the age of six appreciate the \$100 for child care.

I think that some of the job training, particularly in the mining, like ASEP, and some of the programs—the labour market agreements—have been excellent. We would like to see some of the groups that sometimes aren't participating in the workforce, such as the women, the aboriginals, and some of our new immigrants.

I'm wondering if you would like to expand on that, on some of the things you see for Saskatchewan, and some of the programs that you particularly cite as being really good for a booming province like we have.

Hon. Monte Solberg: First of all, *merci*. I appreciate the compliment on my French, but I don't know that it's quite that good.

Secondly, Saskatchewan really is a good example of how we can work better with the aboriginal community. On the one hand, you have a booming economy, a very exciting economy. It's an economy where, to a large degree, jobs are being created in remote rural areas. Obviously you've got big mining operations in the north, companies like Cameco and others. On the other hand, you have a very large aboriginal population that really has not enjoyed the fruits of that boom to the degree it could. I see that as a terrific opportunity. That's where programs like ASEP are so important.

In fact, we just announced a number of new ASEP projects in northern Saskatchewan, and the importance of these can't be overstated. I've met a number of people who've been through these programs. It's no exaggeration to say that these programs are life changing for the people who get that kind of support.

I think an important thing for this committee to note is that one of the reasons for that success is that when companies go into this

program, they, along with the federal government, work with aboriginal people toward getting them the training for very particular jobs that have wages attached to them, so they know that when they graduate they will actually step into those jobs. In stepping into those jobs—these are typically very well-paying jobs—they'll be able to support themselves and their families and really, in many cases, be role models in their communities.

This is a program that works well, and I think we need to try to replicate some of the lessons from that and from some of the other aboriginal programming, but really, a lot of our programming in general. I would welcome this committee's views and insights on that when it comes to your report on poverty.

● (0950)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Minister, thank you for coming today.

Given the demographic changes in Canada, we will be facing a new reality in the future. There will be more seniors than there have ever been in the past. Can you tell members of this committee what the government is doing to provide programs that will support our seniors? For example, what is the government doing for people receiving the Guaranteed Income Supplement or in the area of exemptions for income earned? Can you tell us about the New Horizons Program and what the benefits of it are?

[*English*]

Hon. Monte Solberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Gourde.

The fact is that we've made some important changes when it comes to seniors. We are not only reducing all kinds of taxes, like the GST, so they have more money in their pockets, and reducing income tax for people at the low end, but we are improving, by the way, the GIS. It is up 7% over the two years, over and above cost of living increases.

The new exemption is also really important. Many seniors want to work. They're vital. They're in good health. The new exemption we put in the budget would mean that they could earn up to \$3,500 without it affecting their benefits. That's important, and not just in areas where labour markets are hot. Many seniors want to work and supplement their incomes and stay vital. So I think it's also an investment in the good health of seniors.

When it comes to New Horizons, we've added funding, so there's money available—I talked about this in my remarks—to make the public in general and other seniors aware of the problem of elder abuse. Senator LeBreton has taken the lead on this. I think this is a very important issue. Somebody has characterized it as being similar to the taboo in the past around the issue of spousal abuse. It was dragged out of the closet. Now we're doing the same with elder abuse. Many times this takes the form of financial abuse. Often it's within families, sad to say. So I think this is an important initiative that will help make this issue public and will protect seniors and make their lives better.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Minister, on page 4, you talk about matching supply and demand in the labour market. According to the outlook for the Canadian labour market, about 5.5 million job openings are expected for 2006 to 2015. Emploi-Québec has confirmed that by 2011, 700,000 jobs could be vacant in Quebec.

How is the government ensuring that the skills of Canadian workers will be sufficient to meet the labour market's requirements? How much has the government invested in skills training under the labour market agreements, and what provinces have signed these agreements?

[*English*]

Hon. Monte Solberg: One of the most important things I think we can do is make sure people understand that we see the potential in them to make these changes. In Quebec, I note, 40% of the successful job seekers in the past year have been people over the age of 55. We have to make sure we arm people with the skills and really, in many cases, the confidence to make these changes.

The targeted initiative for older workers has been quite helpful that way. I've received a number of reports from people who've gone through the program, and they've been very excited about what it has meant in terms of, again, giving them the confidence to take on that training and to get a new job.

There is other important programming we have in place. There's already an existing program through labour market development agreements to provide Employment Insurance Act, part II, training. There's \$2 billion that provides workers with training to help them transition from one job to another.

We've put in place new labour market agreements that will allow people who've never been in the workforce, whether it's young people, recent immigrants, or aboriginals, to get the skills they need to move, in many cases, off social assistance or some kind of support into the workforce. To me, that's exciting. We've put in place the aboriginal skills and employment partnership. There's a lot of programming already in place to provide that kind of support. Ultimately, even the community development trust will help give provinces and local communities the flexibility to do what they need to do so they can help people make the transition from sectors that are struggling—sectors, frankly, like forestry—into others that are doing better.

There are a number of things in place, but we're not going to rest on that. The other thing, of course, is that we have made important changes to student financial assistance. Young people who thought

post-secondary education was just a dream and that they could never do it now actually have the option of getting into school—tech school, university, or college—and ultimately getting a job. And away they go.

• (0955)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gourde.

We're now going to move to Ms. Sgro. We have five minutes as we start our second round.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Thank you very much.

It's nice to see you here.

As you know, we are undertaking a poverty study here, which is a really important piece of work that all of us are very committed to doing in a non-partisan way, but I want to say that if you don't have housing, it doesn't matter how many job training programs and programs to deal with all the other issues that we face if people don't have a roof over their head and a safe place to live. Frankly, if that is the case, the rest of the issues that we try to cover will not go anywhere.

Your number was 650,000 people who are in need of housing. Whether we're talking about mentally ill or not, we're talking about huge numbers. Peel Region has a 20-year waiting list for affordable housing. The City of Toronto probably has at least a 10-year waiting list. That's a lot of people waiting to get into affordable housing who really want a chance to improve their lifestyle.

The affordable housing initiative and the renovation program will both expire in March 2009, as well as section 95, which refers to co-op housing. Those agreements will start to expire in March 2009, and we are almost at the beginning of May 2008. There are approximately 32,000 people living in co-operative housing across Canada who are very concerned about what's going to happen to those.

I've thrown a bunch of issues out to you, and since I'm sharing time with my colleagues, I would ask you to be as concise as possible with your answer.

Hon. Monte Solberg: Thank you.

I agree with you that housing is the key to helping people who are living in poverty. I've spent a lot of time going across the country. I've been in the downtown east side and north Regina and, really, right across the country. I've been Saint John recently, and I was in Portland, Oregon, by the way, looking at what they're doing down there and seeing what has made them as successful as they've been. I agree that housing is a start. We are reviewing a lot of these programs right now because, again, I think we owe it to taxpayers but certainly to vulnerable Canadians to make sure the programs are actually achieving the ends they were intended to achieve.

In some cases, I think we can point to examples where the funding has not even been utilized under the affordable housing initiative, and in other cases some of this funding can't be utilized because there's already a big housing stock and they'd rather have other kinds of support. I'd be happy to talk to you about that, but I'm conscious of time.

Therefore, I do think we have to review these things to make sure they will address the problems both today and going forward.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Clearly, we know that the housing is a need. The fact that we're into May 2008 and not making decisions on where some of this is going, also knowing the time it takes for a roll-out of various initiatives, doesn't give people living in the co-operatives much comfort, waiting for you to review it and make a decision.

Do you have a deadline as to when you'll be making a decision?

• (1000)

Hon. Monte Solberg: Well, with social housing, I'll just mention, first of all, that there's no deadline on that. That's going forward. We are reviewing it. We've got a working group with the provinces to look at both the physical state of those properties and also the financial state of them, because some of them are struggling financially. So we're doing that, and that's a joint review.

With some of the others, we are reviewing them ourselves to make sure they are achieving the answers they're supposed to achieve. And of course we've also launched new initiatives like the on-reserve market housing fund, which goes forward from this point. It will provide 25,000 homes for people on reserves.

So there are a number of things going forward that are being reviewed—

Hon. Judy Sgro: Do you have a deadline, in particular on section 95 to do with the co-ops?

Hon. Monte Solberg: I'm informed that won't expire to any degree for about five to seven years, so—

Hon. Judy Sgro: Some are expiring in March 2009.

Hon. Monte Solberg: There are some where they've paid off their mortgage. The question is, does the federal government continue to provide funding that was originally intended to pay off their mortgage? Well, their mortgage will be paid off. I know there's some pressure from groups to continue to fund organizations that already had their mortgages paid off. We're sort of struggling to understand the reasoning for that.

I think one of the most important things we can do—if I may say this, Mr. Chairman—is figure out why it is that some organizations were successful in maintaining their housing while they received that funding and have ultimately paid off their mortgages and have maintained a physical state, while others haven't. We need to make sure we don't continue to fund, in the same way as we have in the past, those that have allowed that housing to run down.

The Chair: Thank you. That's all the time we have.

We're going to move to Mr. Lake, for five minutes.

Mr. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont, CPC): Thanks, Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for coming today.

I want to start by commenting on Ms. Dhalla's assertion that the \$100 per month is actually \$60 after tax. Of course, as Ms. Dhalla knows, the amount is taxed in the lowest-income earner's hands, so her numbers reflect a circumstance where the lowest-income earner in a family is in a 40% tax bracket, and of course most low-income

families that I know of are nowhere near that circumstance. But it's typical of the Liberal spin. They had 13 years to implement something, anything, on child care and did absolutely nothing—not a single child care space created in 13 years. They did fund the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada, I think, somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$6 million. That was basically to be a PR arm of the Liberal Party, spinning the Liberal idea that it actually cared about child care, but for \$6 million not one single space was created. Not surprisingly, the former executive director is now a Liberal candidate, so I guess that's typical of the Liberals' approach.

What I'm curious about, though, is actual results, so could you comment on how much we have invested in child care this year? Second, how many spaces have been announced by the provinces and territories? Third, how many families currently receive the universal child care benefit?

Hon. Monte Solberg: First, all in right now, we're putting about \$5.6 billion a year into child care. That includes the universal child care benefit and direct transfers to the provinces, which this year are \$1.1 billion. It includes the new child tax credit, which goes to families with children under the age of 18. All in, it is \$5.6 billion, which is significantly more than any government has ever invested in these things.

Just as important, it provides people with choice, and I think that's wildly popular with many Canadians. In making sure money gets directly into the hands of parents, it also ensures that in many cases people just have more money overall for their children. As I said before, it lifts 25,000 families right out of poverty. There are 1.5 million families that receive the universal child care benefit right now, on behalf of 2.1 million children, so it reaches a lot of people today.

You had one other question.

Mr. Mike Lake: I was asking how many spaces were announced by the provinces and territories.

Hon. Monte Solberg: So far, the provinces have announced their intention to create over 60,000 spaces. By the way, I should point out that not only are they creating spaces, but many provinces are having to reinvest, out of the \$1.1 billion growing to \$1.3 billion, to put money into things like supplementing wages for workers. In places like Alberta, but certainly not just Alberta, it's difficult to compete against some of the wages that are being paid in the private sector, so they need that funding for other things. There's enough flexibility to address all of those needs.

• (1005)

Mr. Mike Lake: If I could, I just wanted to touch on one other thing that's important to the people in my riding: the temporary foreign worker program. You kind of commented on new funding for administering programs. I know we've taken some significant steps in terms of expedited LMOs, for example, and that is very much appreciated by some of the employers in the riding. But maybe you could comment on the program in general.

Hon. Monte Solberg: I would say two things about it.

That program is extraordinarily important to the labour force in the short run, because it helps meet some of the immediate needs, and now with some of the changes being proposed to our immigration system, we'll provide a pathway to permanent residence for temporary workers who meet particular standards. That's exciting, and there's a lot of support for that certainly from people who are the beneficiaries of that program, but also from unions, for instance, that are excited about that aspect.

Second, it's really important that we take steps to protect temporary workers so they don't face abuse. Under the law, temporary workers have the same rights as any Canadian worker. We have to make sure that is recognized in fact as well as in the law. So we've signed a number of letters of understanding with the provinces so we can share information to make the provinces aware of who is here. Then the provinces, who typically have jurisdiction, can monitor them and make sure they are being treated well. Alberta has been a leader on this. Manitoba has stepped up to the plate, and lately so has British Columbia. They've all stepped in with new support to make sure they've got monitoring in place.

As a federal government we're providing information in other languages: Spanish right now, for seasonal agriculture workers. So when they come in, they get information that says, here are your rights and here's who you contact if there are any problems at all.

The Chair: That's all the time we have for this round.

We're now going to move to Madame Bonsant, followed by Mr. Cuzner.

You have five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Minister, as I only have five minutes, I would like you to give me brief answers. I will be discussing the Summer Career Placements Program. Currently, we are in the process of helping the organizations to receive funds.

I have two questions regarding this. We learned that the first draft, the first version of the requests made by the agencies was done in Montreal. It was subsequently transmitted to the local human resources, who continued working on it. We signed our agreements. We are now contacting the organizations by telephone to tell them that their applications were accepted. However, Human Resources Canada told us not to advise them by phone, because that would create a third procedure. This means that everything that we did is sent back to Montreal.

I would like to know whether there will really be a fourth evaluation in Montreal to refine the results of our work.

I also learned that the deputy minister is in charge of signing the decisions we make locally on behalf of organizations. I want to know whether the deputy minister is really the last one to sign. If the deputy minister signs the agreement, will this person be entitled to change our decisions? They are waiting to find this out before they can hire students. In my opinion, this is a waste of time. In common language, as they say, they are dilly-dallying. People need this information because they have to follow a process and they must

publish their requirements in newspapers, through press conferences, and they must hold interviews. The month of May is already here and the university students have finished their session. I want to know whether they really go through all these antics and whether the deputy minister actually signs all our decisions.

[*English*]

Hon. Monte Solberg: Thank you for the question.

First of all, it is true that we've tried to do a lot to be responsive to members of Parliament with respect to Canada's summer jobs this year. We have provided an untold number of briefings to lay out the process, and secondly, we've given the local Service Canada outlets the ability to work with members of Parliament to identify which groups should receive that funding.

I'm not aware of exactly how the process worked in Quebec—the way you are describing it—but in the end members of Parliament get to decide how that funding is spread around. If there is a dispute ultimately, and I don't anticipate any, that decision will come to me to work out with the member of Parliament. That's the way the system has always worked, and it will work that way this year.

• (1010)

[*Translation*]

Ms. France Bonsant: You are telling me that no one will override our decisions, which are final. Therefore, I can contact the organizations to tell them that they can begin their hiring process.

[*English*]

Hon. Monte Solberg: No, remember what we said, though. When we laid out the process, we said that April 30 was when we would finish up the process. We made that very clear in all the briefings. So we don't want anyone to get ahead of that precisely because if there were disputes of some kind—and I don't know what they would be, and hopefully there won't be any—they would have to come to me and I would have to settle that with the member of Parliament and Service Canada officials.

[*Translation*]

Ms. France Bonsant: This means that once everything has been signed and approved, I can call the people and the organizations to tell them that they can begin their hiring process.

Hon. Monte Solberg: No.

Ms. France Bonsant: Fine. That is right.

[*English*]

Hon. Monte Solberg: No, what we are asking people to do is just observe the timelines and remember that we pushed everything up this year compared to last year precisely because we wanted to give organizations more time. And I think we've done that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. France Bonsant: Last year, we did not have a word to say in these matters, and so this has nothing to do with what we are doing this year. All right.

I will ask you another question, because I only have five minutes left. I want to follow up on the question put by my colleague, Ms. Gourde, and which you probably did not have the time to answer.

In the 2007 budget, you said that you were transferring an envelope of \$500 million for the labour market for youth, working senior citizens and handicapped persons to the provinces and territories. I would like to know where these agreements stand today.

[English]

Hon. Monte Solberg: No, we said two things in the budget: one is \$500 million into new labour market agreements; secondly, we would discuss the feasibility of transferring some of that programming to the provinces. We're still negotiating with Quebec and other provinces regarding the labour market agreements and we'll continue to have discussions regarding the feasibility of transferring some of this other programming, but we're really not at a stage yet where we can say we have reached any conclusions at all.

[Translation]

Ms. France Bonsant: If I understand you correctly, and if the interpretation was accurate, you mean to say that there has not been any agreement because you are asking Quebec for things that Quebec does not want to give you because it wants to have its share of the \$500 million, which is the money promised to the provinces, with full compensation and without any obligation to make an exhaustive report to the federal government. Is the problem caused by the litigation between the federal government and Quebec regarding the three categories of workers that Quebec wants to patriate along with the money, and without granting the federal government any say in the matter?

[English]

The Chair: That's all the time we have, but Minister, you can answer the question.

Hon. Monte Solberg: I'll answer very briefly.

Every time we sit down with a jurisdiction, they have things they want and we have things we want. There are still five jurisdictions outstanding, and we'll continue to negotiate with them until we can reach a conclusion. In the end, it's in the interest of both the provinces and certainly the people they serve to have that money. We'll keep working with them. We'll make a good faith attempt, as I'm sure they will, to reach an agreement and ensure that we're both meeting standards that are important to the people we serve.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Bonsant.

We're now going to move to Mr. Cuzner, for five minutes.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Thank you, Minister, for making yourself available for the full two hours today. The committee appreciates that.

With where the economy is going, I think we can agree around the table that the next months ahead could be very trying for many Canadians, certainly for seniors in this country. When we see increases in the staples—in fuel costs, in the cost of food—it is our seniors who are going to be impacted going forward. Many seniors will have to make a decision as to whether they will fill their oil tank, fill their cupboard, or fill their prescription. It will be difficult in days ahead.

What we see is a differing in ideology. I think it was in the 2004 Liberal budget that we were able to invest and make an increase in the amount of GIS for seniors. I think it was up to about \$800 for a couple. I know we pushed hard for that. It was the first increase they

had experienced in probably 12 years. We would have liked to see even more.

In this budget, the only focus on the guaranteed income supplement is the allowance for the amount that one is able to earn. Really, that impacts such a small number of Canadians. They refer to it as “modest”. When it's impacting about 4% of Canadians—and I know those numbers are probably rounded up—are we not failing 96% of Canadians?

Of the 20 of us around this table, if we were GIS recipients, at 4%—let's round it up to 5%—only one of us would be impacted by this. So it's not that great a program.

Wouldn't you believe, Minister, that it would have been better to go to that cabinet table and fight for further funding, for more money for the guaranteed income supplement?

• (1015)

Hon. Monte Solberg: Thank you.

I agree that the changes we've made won't hit everyone, but it's not the only thing we're doing. I think that's an important point to make.

Not only has the guaranteed income supplement gone up 7% over the last two years, over and above the cost of living increases, but we've put in place, as you point out, this increase in the exemption for the guaranteed income supplement.

We've cut the GST twice. Remember, the GST is the only tax that many people with low income pay. So that's an important saving for many people.

We've retroactively put in place tax relief. We've raised the basic personal exemption and the married exemption. We've also lowered the basic rate. We've also introduced income splitting. We've raised the age credit, and we've raised the pension credit.

We've done a lot of things to leave more money in the pockets of seniors.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Minister, you'll appreciate the fact, too, that the GST is a consumption tax, and these people really aren't high-end consumers in this country. So there may be a cut in tax, but it's all relative, isn't it?

Hon. Monte Solberg: Yes, that's right, but if they're not paying any income tax, reducing income taxes won't help. So this is a help to everyone. A few hundred dollars to someone on the low end is a significant amount of money.

The Chair: We're going to move now to Mr. Brown.

Mr. Gord Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Minister, for coming today.

I'm just following up on one of the comments about seniors. I can tell you, after going around my riding quite a bit in the last number of days as many of our seniors are doing their income tax, that those who do receive pension income are very happy now that they can split it. It's making a big impact on many people who are enjoying the benefits of that particular financial move.

Being from Ontario, Minister, I know there has been some concern about housing funding. Maybe you could enlighten us a little bit about some of the things we've been hearing about some of that funding being unused.

• (1020)

Hon. Monte Solberg: The federal government stepped up with a lot of money in the last couple of years to support affordable housing. We know that about 40% of the funding allocated to Ontario under the affordable housing initiative hasn't been used yet. As I said in answer to an earlier question, it's one of the reasons I think we have to have a look at whatever form future support for housing takes, because we want to make sure the money is spent to help vulnerable people. That's the whole point.

The other point I would make is that in some cases we offer cost-shared programming, like the residential rehabilitation assistance program. Some provinces don't participate in it, and Ontario is one of them. We have to make sure when we offer programming that we do so in a way to ensure that we leverage support from all our partners, because the point is to serve vulnerable Canadians. If you can't leverage that support, then you're not getting the best value you can get for the people who need the help the most.

I appreciate that everyone has ideas and helpful criticism on how we can deal with these things, but if you're going to criticize, I think it's incumbent upon you to make sure you step up to the plate and provide the support you should be providing from your level of government as well.

Mr. Gord Brown: Thank you.

I know there were some questions a little earlier about the new student grant program. Minister, I'd like to get a little bit of clarification. How many students will this new program help? How many more students is it going to help than the program the former Liberal government had?

Hon. Monte Solberg: Right now under the CMSF, about 140,000 people a year get support through the current study grants and access grants, these kinds of things. Under the new program, 245,000 people will benefit. They will know ahead of time whether or not they'll receive it. In other words, if you're a low- or middle-income student and you apply to go to school and are accepted, and you meet the income criterion, you will get that funding and you will know that ahead of time. So this will help improve access, which I think has to be the goal. Not only that, you'll get it for every year you're in school. So if you're going to college for a couple of years, you'll get it both years. If you're going to university for four years, you'll get it for all four years. If you're a low-income student, four years of funding at \$250 a month while you're in school, that's \$8,000 you know you're going to get, and that's a big bite out of any student loans you might have had to take out otherwise.

I think it's terrific. We've had great support from the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations and other student organizations that

have really lauded this approach and believe this is an important step forward. I hope my colleagues in the official opposition will see the wisdom of this and will support it when it comes to a vote in the House of Commons.

Mr. Gord Brown: I have one minute left.

Minister, back in the days when we were in opposition, we stated that we would fix the employment insurance account and make it more transparent and more accountable. I know the government has taken some action on this front. Maybe you could tell us about that.

Hon. Monte Solberg: I'd be happy to.

Obviously when we were in the opposition I was certainly a critic of how that fund was being utilized. We have made very important changes so that workers and employers know, going forward, that when they pay these funds towards employment insurance, they will be used for employment insurance. That's important not just because it means that any extra premiums will come back in the form of lower premiums down the road, but it's important in terms of restoring faith in government.

For a lot of people, I think that faith was fundamentally undermined. Going forward, I think you'll see people who have much more confidence in the system than they've had in the past. We've seen all kinds of people who came out strongly in support of this, including unions, small business organizations such as the CFIB, and the Conseil du patronat du Québec and many others. They've all come out strongly in favour of this, and I think that speaks volumes. They're the people who deal with it, and they know precisely how it didn't work in the past.

The Chair: Thank you.

We're now going to move to Mr. Martin, for five minutes.

Mr. Tony Martin: Thank you very much.

I just want to go back for a second to the whole housing issue and the fact that as we move into our study on poverty, and as I listen to groups that have been working with those who have been living in poverty for years in this country, the biggest and first request is for more money for housing and affordable housing. If Stats Canada indicates later this week that this growing gap between the rich and the poor is driving the price of housing up and out of the ordinary Canadian's reach, then we really have to step up to the plate and do something.

I know organizations have come forward, such as the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, to indicate that for them the first priority is more housing. We're now seeing the deterioration and, in some instances, the destruction of some of the affordable housing that we built in the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s, with no money to replace it. A lot of that is becoming gentrified. It's becoming high-end condos, and we have a growing difficulty.

You do have a vehicle that you could use. I heard the question and the answer to “What's Ontario doing with the federal money?” That's a frustration for all of us who want to see that money flowing. But you do have the co-op housing sector that you could use very effectively, and it has been used in the past. You could put money in and have it flow through to develop some very creative, unique, and I think very effective housing for all kinds of people with low to modest incomes.

In line with that, there has been some focus lately, by you and others, on this experiment in Portland, Oregon, of rent supplements for homelessness. There was a CBC documentary and a connection to Victoria, where they have a huge problem, where in fact this question of the affordability of housing is paramount, where hotels have switched to residences. Portland apparently benefited from a national program with substantial federal money invested. I heard on that report a Victoria councillor lamenting that Ottawa has not recognized and in fact isn't giving the national leadership that's required there.

You've been to Portland. You, from what I understand, are saying it's not something that the Canadian government sees as doable or within your purview. Could you maybe talk to us a little bit about that?

•(1025)

Hon. Monte Solberg: Sure.

Let me just say that I should correct the record. One of the things that were asked of me is whether we could implement the Portland model in Canada. There is no reason we can't do some of the things they do, but Portland was very unique. They had a 7% vacancy rate, and they used a lot of the funding they received to provide rent supplements to help people step into private rental stock. That's not an option that's open to places like Victoria certainly, or many cities, because as you said, as the economy grows and people are more prosperous, not only are they building more and more expensive housing in a lot of places, but many apartments are being converted to condominiums and this kind of thing.

I'm simply pointing out that you can't necessarily transfer directly what works in one area to another area. A lot of times it's local solutions to local problems.

I think we need to figure out what gets results. In some cases that means building new units; in other cases it means taking advantage of existing housing stock, maybe with rent supplements. It may be more in Atlantic Canada that you see existing stock where you still have those opportunities, and maybe to some degree in smaller centres you still have those opportunities. In other places we'll have to find ways to build, but then there are questions about how you do that. I think we need to be creative and consider all kinds of ideas when it comes to that.

At any rate, let me affirm that I am concerned about this. That's the reason I went to Portland. I've been to the downtown east side; I've been across the country, many times, looking at some of these things. The conclusion I have come to is that not only is this complicated, but it does require people of good will—and this is what the people in Portland emphasized—to come together in partnerships to try to address these issues and find the best possible solutions to suit that particular jurisdiction.

•(1030)

Mr. Tony Martin: Thank you.

As you know, we're already into this study on poverty. We've been waiting for it for quite some time, and I'm very happy that it's happening.

The first quest is to try to figure out a measurement of poverty that everybody can agree on. Perhaps the government might decide there's something that we can hold up, look at, and hold people accountable.

The market basket measure is one that is fairly popular, not with everybody, but it certainly works to some degree. We're led to believe that your department has done a review of that from the 2003-04 measure that we're using in order to update it, and that in fact it has been ready for several months. We need that information here. It would be very helpful in our discussions, as we grapple with this issue of measurement.

Is it ready? What's the holdup? When can we see it released so we can use it?

Hon. Monte Solberg: I have to say that I'm not quite sure I'm familiar with what you're talking about. But the deputy minister says that if you want officials to brief the committee on what we are doing on market basket measure—if that's what you're asking; I'm not quite sure, Tony—we'd be happy to do that.

In general, we don't have an official measure of poverty in Canada. But I think the market basket measure has a lot to commend it, because obviously an income of \$1,500 in a rural part of the country typically goes a lot further than it does in downtown Toronto.

I think costs are an important part of the calculation when you figure out what people's real standard of living is. I think a market basket measure has a lot to commend it when you're trying to figure out, first of all, how many people are struggling, and secondly, whether or not you're making progress in helping people get out of poverty.

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Martin.

We're now going to move to our third and final round. We have Mr. Savage, for five minutes.

Mr. Michael Savage: Thank you.

And Mr. Cuzner.

The Chair: Of course. Five plus one.

Mr. Michael Savage: Minister, the last time we were talking about the student grant program you were about to confirm for me that \$350 million is for the student grant program, plus the \$140 million for the Canada study grants and the Canada access grants will be carried forward on top of the \$350 million.

Hon. Monte Solberg: I'm saying that people receiving those things won't be any worse off. They'll continue to receive funding until they are finished their studies.

I have confirmed that what I said is correct. We feel that not only does this leave everyone whole, it means that another 105,000 people will be able to benefit from this every year, and it will help increase access, which was—

Mr. Michael Savage: So the Canada access grant and the Canada study grant continue unaffected by the budget.

Hon. Monte Solberg: They're rolled into what we're proposing for the student grants, but people will receive funding.

Mr. Michael Savage: Okay. So it's not \$350 million; it's \$350 million plus \$140 million per year.

For example, about 20% of the recipients of both the Canada study grant and the Canada access grant—perhaps even more, but I think about 20%—were persons with disabilities. And they could receive up to \$8,000 a year, recognizing that they have greater need than regular students. Will they continue to be able to get higher amounts of money, \$8,000 a year, and not just the \$250 a month?

Hon. Monte Solberg: Yes, they will get more money. And we're making further improvements so that persons who become disabled after their studies will no longer have to continue to pay student loans. And we'll reveal more of the details with respect to the repayment assistance plan later, but we're making important changes so that vulnerable people aren't caught with a big burden forever.

Mr. Michael Savage: You quoted the Canadian Federation of Students endorsing the new Canada student grant program. That's certainly partly correct, but it's a pretty precise picking of an endorsement. If you endorsed everything that CFS did, you'd be a lot better off probably, and I would say the same thing about CASA and the Coalition for Student Loan Fairness.

There are an awful lot of areas where CFS would disagree with you. They do agree they were not fans of the millennium scholarship, and they like what they see in some of the Canada student grants, but they have a lot of questions. So if you have information about this program, and specifically how the Canada access grant and the Canada study grant are going to be incorporated as we go forward, I think that would be very helpful.

One of the issues that many students and educators and researchers and public policy analysts have about the program is that in the budget it says that it's designed to increase post-secondary education participation, particularly of under-represented groups. But the millennium foundation gave up to \$3,000 a year. This program gives up to \$2,000 a year. So you give to more people, but less to those who specifically need it. That's an issue.

•(1035)

Hon. Monte Solberg: I would make the point that, first of all, you would only get the millennium funds if you actually had already decided to go to university, were accepted, and then would apply and would get the funding. It would not be used, therefore, to get you into school, because you would only get it after you had gone to school.

Secondly, there was no guarantee you would get it for more than one year. So it was quite a gamble for a lot of people.

What we're doing is making sure that people have funding they can count on for every year they're in school. And finally, it won't be

just for university; it'll be for college and for tech school, which was something that CMSF didn't do.

Mr. Michael Savage: No, CMSF did a lot more than the budget would give them credit for. Specifically, this budget indicates that it's a significant intrusion into provincial jurisdiction. Every province in the country supported the extension of the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, including the Province of Quebec, where they don't have the student loan program. So the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation went through survey after survey. It went through a number of evaluations and was considered to be a program that was working across this country.

I want to ask you about the student loan changes that you've made. We've heard a lot about the student loan evaluation process and that the study of student loans would bring in some big changes. Probably the most significant change that students were looking for was a change in interest rate. An awful lot of countries in the world are either charging cost of government borrowing or in fact don't even charge interest on student loans. If you want to make a big difference to student debt, did you consider reducing the student loan interest rate, and what considerations did you have in deciding not to?

Hon. Monte Solberg: I think the more important change we're proposing is with respect to our repayment assistance plan, which we haven't fully rolled out yet. But the reason I like that approach better than what you're proposing is that it will ensure that no matter what the reason is that people are struggling to repay, they will have easier terms and it will be easier for them to ultimately repay that loan. And ultimately, if they're not able to repay, it will at some point be forgiven. We think that's a better way because it catches all the possibilities that people are struggling with to repay their student loans.

Mr. Michael Savage: How much money does the government make on student loans?

Hon. Monte Solberg: Nothing. We lose money on student loans.

Mr. Michael Savage: How much money do you make on the interest rate on student loans?

Hon. Monte Solberg: Well, we don't make any.

Mr. Michael Savage: There are always going to be administration costs. One understands that. But do you have any sense of what it would cost you to go to government cost of borrowing?

Hon. Monte Solberg: Yes, it's a net loser.

Mr. Michael Savage: But do you know what it would cost to go to government cost of borrowing, for example?

Hon. Monte Solberg: Not off the top of my head.

Mr. Michael Savage: Did you consider, though, reducing the interest rate on student loans?

Hon. Monte Solberg: You have to put this into context. We just increased the overall support for students to enter school.

First of all, 60% of the public never utilize student loans and are able to go to school without it. For those who don't, we think one of the most important things you can do is deal with the up-front costs.

I'll make two points. We increased the support for post-secondary education last year by \$800 million, a 40% increase, which the provinces can use to maintain tuitions, or reduce them if they choose, I guess, but we know in many cases they've actually decided to freeze tuition rates. That's important.

Secondly, these new student grants will ensure that people have the knowledge that they will get cash up front and therefore won't have to have as big a student loan as they would have otherwise.

We think this approach of up-front cash and more realistic terms when people graduate and are struggling to repay is the best approach.

Mr. Michael Savage: You didn't consider dropping the rate, though? Did you look at what it would cost to reduce the rate on student loans? Was that part of the evaluation process? That's what students are asking for.

Hon. Monte Solberg: It's not the choice we made. We made a different choice that I think is better because it's more universal. It will catch people who are struggling to repay, for whatever reason, whether they've had a personal financial disaster or whatever it is.

Mr. Michael Savage: Okay. I agree that we need to do that, but it's not an either/or. Post-secondary education is an important issue. Taking advantage of the skills of Canadians is worth a little bit of an investment.

Hon. Monte Solberg: Yes, and we put a big investment in it.

The Chair: That's all the time we have. You actually got two and a half extra minutes. Don't tell anybody, though.

• (1040)

Mr. Michael Savage: Take it off Mr. Lessard's time.

The Chair: We're going to move to Ms. Yelich, for five minutes, please.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I think it's unfortunate that it wasn't recognized how much we have done for post-secondary education. You don't even have to go to student organizations. I'm sure you can find individual students who have really benefited. One of our initiatives was the exemption from student scholarships.

I know lots of kids who really struggle to go through school. Their parents have worked to try to save so that they don't have to be in deep debt, and they have applied for many grants. I know that has been a terrific asset. And also the transfer to the provinces, even to recognize that....

For Mr. Cuzner's benefit—because it sounded like he was saying this hadn't been discussed at committee—the guaranteed income supplement was huge in the committee. It came around twice, with many witnesses. In fact, it was recommended, the recommendation was passed, and then it was brought up again. So I think it was great that you acknowledged that.

I think you talked about increased funding. I'd like to hear what you meant when you were talking to Mr. Savage, when you said the funding will increase. Perhaps you would like to speak to that a bit.

Hon. Monte Solberg: Sure.

The funding will increase from \$350 million to \$430 million over five years, I guess it is.

But I just want to say a little bit more about this. The Canadian Federation of Students did come out strongly in favour of what we're doing. Here's what Jen Hassum said. She said, "The new system ensures that the money will go directly into the pockets of the students who need it the most." And we had someone from Carleton University, Feridun Hamdullahpur, the provost and vice-president of academics, who congratulated the federal government "for taking really good, solid, long-term initiatives to ensure higher education is affordable to all Canadians".

I heard that across the country. Not only did they thank us on that side of it, but they also thanked us for the huge investment in the granting councils—\$80 million going into the granting councils—the Vanier awards, these kinds of things, which will help us attract some of the brightest people from around the world to our universities. That's not only important for students, but obviously for the impact people like that have in terms of making us more productive as a nation, creating new ideas and new innovation. It's difficult to place a price tag on that. But I think it's a pretty good sign of how dedicated we are to ensuring that we meet that goal of creating the best educated, most flexible workforce in the world.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Yes, and as you cited earlier, this new initiative does definitely have a broader scope. It's not just people who go to university, because we have heard over and over again that not everybody wants to go to university and that many people who have done that have turned to other trades.

Also, another initiative worth mentioning is some of our apprenticeship programs. I'm sure you've had compliments on that, because we have heard lots of positive remarks.

Hon. Monte Solberg: I just want to say a word on that.

Perhaps you're someone who comes from a low-income family and never thought you could go to school, but maybe you're good with your hands and you want to go to trade school. There is \$250 up front in cash grants going in. If you successfully complete the first year of your Red Seal trade, you get another \$1,000. In the second year you get \$250 upfront in cash grants, and another \$1,000 from the apprenticeship incentive grant if you successfully complete your second year. That's a pretty serious support for people on the low end. I can't believe it won't do anything but encourage people in families where there's not a lot of money to really think about going on to post-secondary education in some form.

I'm pretty excited about it. I have talked to provincial ministers, to educators, and even to students. We spoke to students in Victoria the other day in a school where incomes tended to be a little lower. They were very excited about a lot of those changes and they could see some possibilities, I think.

• (1045)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Yelich.

Now we're going to move to Mr. Lessard, for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

You have admitted that the \$54 billion were used in a way that did not respect the principles of the employment insurance fund. As a minister, you can note that the reasoning you use to justify not returning this money to the fund is the same as the reasoning served up by the Liberals in their day.

No one can justify the fact of appropriating money that does not belong to them by stating that they are using it for other purposes. Your party agreed with us on this point. Nevertheless, you are now serving up the same argument. The fact that the money was used for other purposes does not, in our opinion, justify the fact that \$54 billion was diverted. I believe that you will agree with us.

You said that we cannot put the \$54 billion back into the fund, because it would put our budget balance in jeopardy. Let me remind you that you fully agreed with the opposition—the Liberals were in power at the time—to restore this money to the fund and to consider that the money was lent to the government by workers and employers, in the same way as loans are contracted on the financial market to respect Canada's financial commitments.

I also want to remind you that in Bill C-280, we proposed the very same thing as was recommended by the committee in its third recommendation, which was to spread the reimbursement of the \$46 billion—which was the amount at the time—over a 32-year period at the rate of one and a half billion dollars per year.

Mr. Minister, are you ready to heed this recommendation and consider that the diverted funds were a loan that must be paid back to the fund within a reasonable timeframe, as required by the government's financial commitments?

[English]

Hon. Monte Solberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Lessard.

I guess I would make two points. First of all, our government is putting \$2 billion into the reserve fund, which I think recognizes the fact that since the time we came to power—

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Mr. Minister, we already know what you are about to say. You already owe the two billion dollars to the workers and employers. There's nothing to be gained by this.

Pursuant to the unanimous recommendation of this committee, are you ready to consider reimbursing the sums to the fund as a loan, over a period of a certain number of years, at the rate of one and a half billion dollars per year? Your own party recommended that the loan should be paid back over a period of 10 years, but we thought that this was not realistic. I am proposing a realistic reimbursement. Are you ready to consider this reimbursement as the reimbursement of a loan?

[English]

Hon. Monte Solberg: If I can finish what I wanted to say, I'll try to answer your question as best I can.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: I have only five minutes, Mr. Minister. You are about to tell us things that we already know. I would like you to answer my question, which is a simple one. Are you ready to consider this sum as a loan that will be reimbursed over a period of

time at a rate set by the unanimous recommendation of the present committee?

[English]

Hon. Monte Solberg: I appreciate that you want me to answer your question in a particular way, but I'm going to exercise my right to answer it as I would choose.

I'm going to say that the \$2 billion we put in, I think, does recognize the fact that premiums have come in during the time we've been in government and were utilized for things other than employment insurance benefits, and so we are fixing the problem going forward. That's an important point, because in making this an arm's-length body, it ensures that the funds going forward will only be used for these things.

Second—and this is a very important point, Mr. Lessard—our party and your party differed fundamentally on this aspect of the use of employment insurance benefits in the past. We were concerned about how that funding was being spent, and you were as well. One thing that separated us from your party is that your party was very excited and wanted to increase spending even more than the previous government was increasing spending, meaning that those funds that came from employers and employees were used to increase spending. You were supportive of that each and every time. We opposed that, partly because we opposed the idea of taking those funds for things other than improving benefits. That's a very fundamental difference between us.

• (1050)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: You are not answering my question at all; this is not fair.

Mr. Chairman, I am addressing you. The minister rarely appears before the committee to give us an opportunity to put straightforward questions to him. He is wasting our time by talking about things that we know already. These things may be relevant to some other forum, but not to this one. I am appalled at his lack of respect for the committee.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lessard.

I think he's been fairly clear that they're not going to be repaying that \$50-some-odd million. Our government has been responsible for the money that's gone in.

We're going to move to the last individual. Mr. Lake had a few more questions. This will be the last questioner, and then we are going to dismiss the witnesses. We've got a vote on the estimates, but we'll do that in due course.

Mr. Lake, you had a couple of questions.

Mr. Mike Lake: Mr. Minister, you commented a little on the labour shortages. It's a pretty significant issue across the country right now, especially given the economic questions and things like that.

One of the things I'm curious about is the Foreign Credentials Referral Office. The issue of foreign credentials is very important in my riding. It gets brought up a lot in light of the labour shortages. It seems there's a real opportunity where these two issues intersect.

I'm wondering if you could elaborate a little on the role of this Foreign Credentials Referral Office. What does it do, and how can it help us deal with these important issues?

Hon. Monte Solberg: There are three things that office is doing.

First of all, the government is trying to do outreach through our missions around the world to make sure that before people apply to come to Canada, they understand there are going to be differences between jurisdictions in terms of recognizing credentials. That's very important. Obviously people may assume that because their academic credentials give them points toward getting into the country, they would then be recognized. That's understandable, but it's not correct. We need to make sure they're clear on that.

Second, we now offer services through all our Service Canada outlets—of which there are 620 around the country—so that people know they can come in there and get guidance on how they can go about either having their credentials recognized or, if they can't get them recognized, upgrading to meet Canadian standards.

Finally, we're working with professional bodies and are supporting them in some cases with funding, so not only do they undertake the process of having a look at people's credentials and what's involved in that, but they also make a good-faith attempt to help people upgrade.

If I can say—and this is a frustration for me and I get upset about it—some professional bodies are terrific when it comes to making a good-faith attempt to work with immigrants to Canada to find a way to help them upgrade. Others say, “You don't meet our standards, and too bad for you.” What's frustrating for me is that difference. I think we've got to work with our provincial colleagues, who have a lot of authority in this area, to ensure that pressure is put on some of these bodies to make sure they're making a good-faith attempt to actually help people meet Canadian standards. That is occurring with some professional bodies in some jurisdictions, but with others, I'm sad to say I just don't see evidence that it is.

Mr. Mike Lake: Right.

In regard to the labour shortage as well, I want to come back to the GIS exemption, if we could. Can you speak to the importance of that decision to raise the exemption and what impact that should have on seniors and their ability in recognition of the efforts they make to contribute in the workforce?

Hon. Monte Solberg: Well, I'd be happy to. One of my colleagues, Myron Thompson, the member for Wild Rose, made this point to me a while ago when he told me about someone he knew quite well, who he ran into in a food bank. He was there to make an announcement or show support of some kind, and she was there to get some groceries. He was quite astounded at this, because he knew this woman well, and his point was that she was very willing to work, but she couldn't really afford to because her benefits would be clawed back.

I've heard this from others, and others of you in this room have heard the same thing.

While it won't touch every senior, it certainly gives options to tens of thousands of seniors who want to work. Maybe it's because they just like the interaction with people at work or maybe it's because they want to earn some extra money. If you can earn up to \$3,500 extra a year without it affecting your benefits, that's a lot of money to help people make ends meet. It also addresses, obviously, in many parts of the country, the issue of labour shortages. I know I've heard from a number of employers who are pretty excited about the prospect of this passing and becoming the law of the land, because they can see the possibility of employing a lot of people and of meeting some of the labour shortages that are being experienced in big swaths of the country.

• (1055)

The Chair: Minister, we're just about out of time here. We want to thank you and your team for being here today to answer questions.

What we need to do now is dismiss the witnesses and vote on the estimates. We're going to hand out the list that we're going to go through in terms of votes.

Once again, thank you very much, Minister, for being here today and taking the full two hours.

Hon. Monte Solberg: Thank you.

The Chair: What I'm going to do right now is hand out the votes we need to deal with in terms of estimates. This meeting was on the estimates; that's why we're here. As we hand these out, we will just go through the votes. It's votes 1, 5, 10, 15, 20, and 25.

The reason we're moving this forward is that we have another meeting coming in here right at 11 o'clock. I'm just going to call the question, then.

Mr. Mike Lake: Can we get a recorded vote, please?

The Chair: You want a recorded vote. Is this a recorded vote on each one?

Mr. Mike Lake: Just the first one.

The Chair: Okay. We'll have a recorded vote on just the first one.

Shall vote 1, less the amount voted in interim supply, carry?

HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Department

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....\$606,106,000

(Vote 1 agreed to: yeas 4; nays 1)

The Chair: You want a recorded vote on vote 5 as well? All right.

Shall vote 5, less the amount voted in interim supply, carry?

Vote 5—Grants and contributions.....\$1,675,347,000

(Vote 5 agreed to: yeas 4; nays 3)

Mr. Mike Lake: I'd like one more recorded vote, please.

The Chair: One more. Great. All right.

Shall vote 10, less the amount voted in interim supply, carry?

Canada Industrial Relations Board
Vote 10—Program expenditures.....\$11,018,000

(Vote 10 agreed to: yeas 4; nays 3)

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

Vote 15—To reimburse Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation for the amounts of loans forgiven, grants, contributions and expenditures made, and losses, costs and expenses incurred under the provisions of the National Housing Act or in respect of the exercise of powers or the carrying out of duties or functions conferred on the Corporation pursuant to the authority of any Act of Parliament of Canada other than the National Housing Act, in accordance with the Corporation's authority under the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation Act.....\$2,293,949,000

Canadian Artists and Producers Professional Relations Tribunal

Vote 20—Program expenditures.....\$1,806,000

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety
Vote 25—Program expenditures.....\$3,682,000

(Votes 15, 20, and 25 agreed to)

● (1100)

The Chair: Shall I report the main estimates to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Listen, thank you very much for your cooperation today.

The meeting is adjourned.

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