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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, March 12, 1998

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, March 12, 1998

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 20 petitions.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

BILL S-4

Mr. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Transport on Bill S-4, an act to amend the Canada Shipping Act.

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[*English*]

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT, 1998

Hon. Christine Stewart (Minister of the Environment, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-32, an act respecting pollution prevention and the protection of the environment and human health in order to contribute to sustainable development.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is my great honour and pleasure today to introduce amendments to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act which are intended to enhance the protection of our environment and all Canadians' health and will involve all Canadians in doing so.

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

STATUTORY PROGRAM EVALUATION ACT

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-373, an act to provide for evaluations of statutory programs.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce my bill regarding an act to provide for evaluations of statutory programs which deals with good governance within the program delivery of the civil service to ensure that programs are delivered well, effectively and are well managed.

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

* * *

• (1010)

[*Translation*]

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-374, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Customs Tariff (prohibited toys).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today in this House to table a bill intended to restrict the sale of toys which incite children to violence.

Tabling this bill marks an important milestone in an undertaking begun more than two years ago by a lady in my riding, Mrs. Martine Ayotte.

This mother of five was spurred to action when she purchased a doll which came with the suggestion that certain unsavoury treatments be visited upon it, the details of which I shall spare this House. She then took steps to ensure that the toys available to children would be less violent and more respectful of the values we are trying to transmit to them.

Mrs. Ayotte enlisted the support of a large coalition of organizations and individuals. Her petition against violent toys has collected 260,000 signatures. Moreover, it is in jigsaw form and has been certified by the Guinness Book of Records as the biggest such puzzle in the world.

The bill I am introducing today constitutes an important step toward improving the quality of toys available to children. I hope this House will have an opportunity to debate this and I trust that I can count on the support of all the hon. members in this House.

Routine Proceedings

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

* * *

BALANCED BUDGET ACT

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): moved for leave to introduce Bill C-375, the Balanced Budget Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to introduce this balanced budget bill, or anti-deficit legislation.

The effect of the bill, if passed, would be to prevent the government from incurring deficits, except under extraordinary circumstances. The Minister of Finance would be accountable to Parliament for his management. Another new element is the fact that this bill contains provisions to monitor changes in the immense federal debt.

I therefore introduce this bill in the House in the hope that all my colleagues will pass it quickly.

(Motions agreed to, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

[English]

PETITIONS**EMERGENCY PERSONNEL**

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by a number of Canadians including from my riding of Mississauga South.

The petitioners draw to the attention of the House that police officers and firefighters are required to place their lives at risk on a daily basis as they discharge their duties and that when one of them loses their life in the line their duty their employment benefits do not often provide sufficient compensation for their families. The public also mourns that loss of public safety officers killed in the line of duty and wishes to support in a tangible way the surviving families in their time of need.

● (1015)

The petitioners, therefore, call upon Parliament to establish a public safety officers compensation fund for the benefit of police officers and firefighters who are killed in the line of duty.

RIGHTS OF VICTIMS

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to present a petition with just under 12,000 signatures from my riding of Battlefords—Lloydminster as well as other Canadians, asking the federal government and the justice system to put more emphasis on victims rights other than criminal rights.

They pray that the government will re-examine consecutive sentencing and mandatory minimum sentencing in assault convictions.

* * *

[Translation]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 72 and 74.

[Text]

Question No. 72—**Mr. Howard Hilstrom:**

With respect to the settlement of the federal employees' pay equity issue: (a) at what stage are the negotiations; (b) when will they be finished; and (c) when will the affected persons receive their cheques?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Treasure Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Negotiations were undertaken in April 1997 to resolve the longstanding pay equity complaints filed by the Public Service Alliance of Canada PSAC. The negotiations were based on job evaluation data being considered by the Human Rights Tribunal. The tribunal is currently deliberating on the issue of a methodology to measure and correct pay inequities between predominantly male and female occupational groups. The tribunal is expected to render a decision sometime after March 31, 1998. While the tribunal is deliberating, there remains an opportunity for the employer and PSAC to resolve the complaints through negotiations. However, after several meetings PSAC tabled a counter proposal valued at approximately \$5.3 billion. PSAC was informed that this counter proposal could not serve as a basis for further discussions and that a more reasonable counter proposal was required. No further meetings have been held since December 8, 1997.

If no further progress can be achieved through negotiations, the parties will await the ruling by the Human Rights Tribunal. At this time no further meetings are scheduled between the parties.

The issuance of cheques will be automated to the extent possible. Departments are also doing some preparatory work to accelerate the issuance and delivery of cheques. Once the final amount of the pay equity adjustments has been established, cheques to current employees should be issued within weeks. Cheques to former employees will follow.

Question No. 74—**Mr. Ted White:**

With respect to the House of Commons Intercity Telephone System, which is accessed by members via local telephone numbers in some cities and via a 1-800 number elsewhere in Canada and the USA: (a) are any parts of the system automated so that members can use touch tone input to enter their access code and connect to the chosen telephone number, and if so, which areas of the country have automated systems; (b) what timetable does the government have to fully automate the system across Canada, and what are the projected annual cost savings for carrying out such automation; (c) where is the operator centre for the system located, how many people are employed as operators, and what is the annual cost for those staff; (d) what is the

total annual cost of maintaining the system and what is the cost comparison with contracting for provision of the services using private sector suppliers; and (e) what is the total number of minutes carried by the system each year within Canada and to the USA, and what is the average cost per minute carried to each of these countries?

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Presently the only part of the system that is automated is within the metropolitan free calling area of Montreal.

The government is planning to issue a RFP, request for proposal for this service in the first quarter of fiscal year 1998-99. Projected annual cost savings cannot be determined until all bids are received and analysed.

The operator centre for this system is located in Ottawa. The contract for the operator services/centre was tendered and awarded to Bradson Personnel who employs 40 full and part time people. The value of the contract for the staff is \$650,000 annually and provides government directory assistance in addition to operator services for the Government of Canada.

The total annual cost for maintaining the system is \$4 million which is 37% cheaper than other commercially available services. We expect further reductions and or savings once the service is tendered next year.

The traffic for this service is carried on the Government Intercity Network. The cost of the calls on the network in Canada is 7.25 cents per minute, and calls to the United States are 12.5 cents per minute. Last year the total number of minutes carried was 13.4 million in Canada, and 586,000 in the United States.

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—EDUCATION

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): moved:

That this House censure any action by the federal government in the area of education, such as the introduction of the Millennium Scholarships program or national testing.

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He said: Mr. Speaker, today we are putting a very important issue before the House.

It is important, because we feel we must decry the disease affecting the federal Liberals, which I would call chronic dominating federalism. It is an infectious disease they caught from the Conservatives and is characterized by the search for better ways to intrude in provincial jurisdiction, despite the Constitution's precluding it.

The disease recently led the Liberal government to establish the millennium scholarship fund. An integral part of the financial assistance for students section of the Canadian opportunities strategy, the Canadian millennium scholarships foundation will have an initial budget of \$2.5 billion in order to support access to knowledge and skills for all Canadians.

This is \$2.5 billion worth of pretences because if it were really committed to access and to reducing the debt load of Quebec students, this government would not deny the Quebec government the right to opt out with full compensation.

This government, which praises the knowledge-based economy, will have cut approximately \$3 billion in education in Quebec alone between 1993 and 2003.

This same government championed in this House, in December 1995, a motion recognizing the distinct character of Quebec and explicitly reassuring Quebecers that every federal government department, institution and agency would take this into account in making decisions.

This same Liberal government claimed in the 1996 Speech from the Throne that it would stop using its spending power to develop programs in provincial jurisdictions.

This government, which stated left and right that all it is trying to do is to work in co-operation and partnership with the provinces, disregards provincial jurisdictions and priorities.

This action translates into a net loss for the Quebec education system. This money could have been used to improve the grants and loans system in Quebec, thereby helping to considerably reduce the student debt load, as pointed out by the Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec when it testified before the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development last November.

It is clear to the Bloc Québécois that, by establishing the millennium scholarship fund, the federal government intrudes in an area under Quebec's exclusive jurisdiction.

The evil separatists are not alone; other stakeholders in Quebec have commented on this federal intrusion. On February 18, Alain Dubuc wrote in *La Presse*: "The federal system is based on a system of checks and balances, like the division of powers, which must not be upset. This is especially true in education, where Quebec's distinctiveness is most visible. In fact, one wonders why,

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after establishing its scholarship fund, the federal government would not let the provinces manage the fund should they wish to do so.—Clearly, while it would rather go it alone on this issue, the federal government must reconsider and agree to let the Quebec government manage the millennium scholarships awarded in Quebec”.

• (1020)

Similarly, on February 25, in speaking about these scholarships, the leader of the opposition said he would have preferred to see the jurisdictions of Quebec and the other provinces respected fully.

The member for Sherbrooke is in the paradoxical situation, on the one hand, of supporting a Canadian fund for excellence in education, which is just as much an interference in Quebec’s jurisdiction as the millennium fund and, on the other, thinking of running as a candidate in a party that has always opposed the federal government’s systematic intrusions in provincial jurisdictions, particularly education.

If I understand correctly, he could become leader of a party that is part of a broad coalition calling for the respect of provincial jurisdictions, while the policy has shortcomings that only Liberals and Conservatives understand well enough to explain.

Mr. Speaker, I forgot to mention that I will be sharing my time with the member for Témiscamingue.

Let us leave aside the disagreements of the Liberals and Conservatives and look more closely at this government’s reasons for creating the millennium scholarship fund. The government recently said that it was the provinces that requested it, and that it was necessary to meet the expectations of students in difficult economic straits.

I will not go back over this government’s failure to respect provincial jurisdictions, but will instead focus on what students in Quebec and in the rest of Canada want. It says in the finance minister’s latest budget that these scholarships will be awarded to individuals who need help in financing their studies and demonstrate merit. Is this what students really want?

Why did the Liberals create this millennium scholarship fund? I personally asked the Prime Minister what he had had in mind. On February 26, the member for Shawinigan said in the House: “We think every Quebecker should know that the taxes they pay to the federal government give them something in return”. They are going to know it in this case, you can be sure. The cat is out of the bag, or rather the maple leaf is out of the envelope.

As the Prime Minister said, his goal was to use this program as a promotional tool to increase the federal government’s visibility, waving maple leaves everywhere in Canada and, of course, in Quebec.

The government wants to gain visibility at the expense of debt-burdened students. Did Quebeckers see through this scheme? On March 7, Sondagem published the results of an opinion poll about this millennium scholarship fund. Conducted from February 27 to March 3, this survey is probably a good reflection of public opinion in Quebec. The results reveal that 42 per cent of the 1000 respondents think that the federal government wanted to score political points among the student population, while 20 per cent think that this project is aimed at promoting federalism in Quebec. Only 22 per cent believe that the only purpose of Ottawa’s initiative is to help students.

As we can see, Quebeckers are not fooled by the federal government’s manoeuvres. The president of the Fédération des étudiants universitaires du Québec stated in the *Journal de Montréal* that the millennium fund was only a “visibility exercise” on the part of the federal government, and even an “ego trip”.

In spite of strong pressure, the budget does not provide any right to opt out so that provinces like Quebec can control their share of the \$2.5 billion the federal government wants to spend on higher education.

However, the plan introduced yesterday is still vague and undefined and nothing in it justifies the control of the fund by Ottawa, except perhaps the desire to see a maple leaf on the cheques distributed to students. Maple leaves were good in Nagano. Visibility does not make the provincial education systems better or more efficient; it only creates duplication and overlap.

Jennifer Story, of the Canadian Federation of Students, said, and I quote:

[English]

“questioned why it’s necessary to create a new funding mechanism to deal with it. Why not put the money towards the existing Canadian Student Loan Program? Why create something entirely new?”

[Translation]

Quebec is not the only one to say what we are saying today. There is a large consensus among students and universities, but the government turns a deaf ear to them.

• (1025)

I also have a message for those who held a protest yesterday in front of the Quebec National Assembly. These protesters, who are members of the various student associations, were asking for an end to cuts in the education sector. I support this generation which, in fact, is my generation. However, these young Quebeckers should look across the Ottawa River, they should look at this Parliament to

find those responsible for these cuts. The dumping of responsibilities starts here, with the federal government.

I often wonder, because we hear all this talk here about building a forward-looking society, a society based on skills. But the federal government imposed cuts of over \$3 billion on Quebec, and it is now coming up with another program which essentially seeks to give more visibility to this government. As a society, we have to ask ourselves some tough questions.

Let us not forget that, during the course of this century, life expectancy increased by some 20 years. Since we are now living longer, it is vital to invest in education. Instead, the government is making cuts, thus making the system ineffective or less effective. We have to ask ourselves some tough questions.

Let me tell you how I see things. These are the facts confronting my generation. There is an increasingly wider gap between the people and their elected officials. As I said earlier, the public supports social values and goals, while this government seeks visibility. When are we really going to try to close this gap between elected officials and the public? It is urgent that we answer this question.

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member.

Did he consider the possibility of applying to this issue the principle of subsidiarity advocated by the European Union, and applying the principle of joint management or association between the two levels of government, as regards scholarships?

Also, did the hon. member consider the possibility of a bilateral agreement on education between Quebec and Ottawa, patterned on the 1978 Cullen-Couture agreement?

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, one thing seems rather obvious. I tend to be more forward-looking than fixated on the past. And when I look at the future, what I look for is value for money and equal opportunities for all, meaning that those who want a complete education should be able to get it.

I do hope that everyone here supports this principle and agrees that we must seek the best and most efficient means to reach this goal. At one point in history it was decided that the province was the most efficient level of government to manage education.

I am willing to believe that it is possible for Quebec and Ottawa to reach agreements; the Constitution, which says that education is an area of provincial jurisdiction, is supposed to be such an agreement.

Given this premise, I wonder what the federal government is trying to do with its millennium scholarships. Is it an agreement or an intrusion to gain visibility? It is making no bones about what

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this is all about. I heard the Prime Minister—not a backbencher, but the Prime Minister himself—say that what he was seeking was visibility. Therefore I have serious misgivings regarding the return on investment we will get out of this fund.

We are not against helping students, indeed we believe student assistance to be a basic principle. But what is at issue here is cost-effectiveness. Canadians and Quebecers are taxed to the hilt and deserve the maximum return on their tax dollars.

• (1030)

Education is an investment. As I said before, with life expectancy constantly increasing, it is not uncommon for students to stay in university well into their mid- or late 20s. But today, people can no longer afford this.

That is my answer. I could go on for another hour, but I will try to restrain myself for the rest of the day.

[*English*]

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member who has just spoken said it was not just to help students. If we examine that phrase, he has acknowledged that it will help students. That is the fundamental essence of the Canadian millennium fund. He is only involved and more concerned about the process of delivery which can be and will be discussed.

With respect to using the maple leaf flag and the visibility of the Canadian government, what is wrong with that? We ought to be proud of our Canadian flag and we ought to be proud of our Canadian federal government. If what we can achieve with values is visibility of values, why not do that?

Would the hon. member subserve parochial interest to the greater national interest?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, I want to make one thing clear. If the government opposite promises to give Quebec the right to withdraw, I do not mind if a maple leaf appears on every cheque it sends out.

There are maple leaves everywhere in Quebec. I have nothing against the maple leaf.

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur: In our province maple leaves grow on trees.

An hon. member: They die in the fall.

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay: Yes, they die in the fall.

My objective is efficiency. When I talk about visibility, it is not because I do not want to see a maple leaf. That does not bother me. What I want is a good return on the money to be invested in education. The incredible, costly duplications in the program that

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the government is implementing adversely affect the cost-effectiveness of this investment.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my turn to talk today about Ottawa's old fantasy of meddling in education. We have the feeling that for the federal government it is a way of correcting somewhat a mistake made at the time the constitution was drawn, that is giving provinces jurisdiction over education.

This is not something new or particular to this government. This was also in the platform of other political parties during the last election campaign. Several even wanted to go further and institute national testing. That is precisely why our motion refers to national testing. We know that this is occasionally mentioned in the corridors of power in Ottawa.

In its Speech from the Throne the government also mentioned studies to evaluate the readiness to learn of Canadian children. Why would the federal government want to gauge the readiness of our children to enter the school system if it is not to intervene in some way at some time in the future? And we are not talking about giving provinces money to do the job. The federal government wanted to do this evaluation on its own and, to my knowledge, it is still committed to it.

Why are people in Quebec and elsewhere—I will come back to that—opposed to this interference in education?

I do not want to speak for other provinces, but Quebec people are of a different culture, have a different background—a view not necessarily shared by the present Liberal government, I admit. Priorities are also different and education is a key element of a people's social and economic development. It only makes sense that the Government of Quebec, being closer to its citizens, would want to set its priorities in the field of education. It only makes sense that it be in charge.

That is precisely why the Constitution of Canada gave the provinces exclusive jurisdiction over education, although Ottawa has tried ever since to intervene in that field. Paradoxically, the very government asking the Supreme Court for an opinion on the constitutional acceptability of Quebec's separation also included in its budget new education initiatives that violate the Constitution.

• (1035)

Now it takes sovereigntist members of Parliament from Quebec to come and ask the federal government to respect its own Constitution. It is somewhat surprising to see these great champions of the Canadian Constitution refusing to respect it.

These are the same people who, following the referendum in Quebec, adopted a resolution here in the House of Commons—a

trivial motion without any authority, as we have seen in that case—recognizing Quebec's distinctiveness. We may be called "unique" in other constitutional camouflage processes, but for them, we are unique and distinct only as long as we are like the others. This is yet another blatant federalist contradiction.

No member of this government will argue today that, according to this motion, Quebec should effectively be allowed to deal with its own priorities in the area of education. One after the other, they will support the millennium scholarships program and speak highly of this nice action by the federal government.

In fact, what will be the impact of the federal government's intrusion in the area of education? It starts with millennium scholarships, but how do we know it will stop there? We do not know. But even with regard to the management of this program, Ottawa does not have any infrastructure. It will therefore have to put in place a new bureaucracy. It will try hard to cover it and to pretend the program will somewhat be managed by the private sector, by some people who will be designated by the Liberals, friends of the people in power, but the federal government will still need a network to assess student requests, to receive the forms, to develop them and to change them in order to justify their jobs. Therefore, these people will be there and the federal government will have a structure, a bureaucracy, while the provinces already have their own infrastructure, particularly in the case of Quebec, which has its own loans and scholarships program. That is the first impact.

The other impact, without going further into the debate, because this is what provincial parliaments should be doing, but is it in fact the real priority in education to give scholarships based on performance to students who are already at the post-secondary level? Does the education system not have more urgent needs and needs other than this one? Many people have talked about this in Quebec. Major reforms are being made in the areas of health and education.

Perhaps some elements should be consolidated. Perhaps there are other priorities. The drop-out rate is high at the secondary level. It is not by giving millennium scholarships to students who are doing well in university that this problem will be solved. The federal government is doing this under the guise of so-called access to equal opportunities, but that has no relation to real facts. Access to equal opportunities should mean striving to give everybody access to post-secondary education, but the federal government does not dare to go that far. It is proceeding gradually, starting with post-secondary education, an area it has already stepped in through its spending power.

The federal spending power, this constitutional plague, allows Ottawa to intrude in any area and in any way it sees fit. It has used its spending power to set up joint health and education programs, but the feeling now is it is not getting enough visibility from transfer payments to provinces. It would be better off if it sent

100,000 individual \$3,000 cheques instead. The maple leaf and the federal government would be visible all over the place. After a while, it reviews its contribution, transfer payments are cut and it gives back a symbolic amount in order to achieve greater visibility. This is obviously nothing but a political game.

I would like to come back briefly to the spending power. Over the years, this spending power has become the power to get into debt. The federal government stepped in when it did not have the money to do so. It has invaded provincial jurisdictions on borrowed money. Now that we have a balanced budget, I bet things will only get worse. The federal government is raking in much more revenues that it needs for its own priorities and jurisdictions.

Provincial governments are responsible for health care, education, welfare, municipalities, and their tax capacity, in the case of Quebec anyway, is hardly higher than the federal government's. But the federal government has no qualms about taking in tax revenues in order to look after foreign affairs, national defence, things it deems less visible. So, it intrudes in provincial jurisdictions and keeps taxes at an outrageous level. Even their great mentor, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, expressed that point of view in *Cité libre* before becoming the leader of the Liberal Party. I will have the opportunity to come back to this later today. I do not mind quoting him to his followers among the members opposite.

• (1040)

Are we, in the Bloc Québécois, the only ones to think so? Are we seen like a handful of space creatures for taking up this position? No. A lot of people in Quebec agree with us, from the most federalist among them to the most sovereigntist of all. Let me start by quoting someone who certainly cannot be considered a true sovereigntist. I am talking about Alain Dubuc, editorial writer of *La Presse*. What does he think about this? The day after the budget was tabled, in his review, there was a small paragraph on the millennium fund, where he said: "Nothing in the somewhat fuzzy and still undefined project announced yesterday justifies the decision made by Ottawa to manage this fund themselves, unless it is to become more visible and to have the maple leaf on every cheque handed out to the students". This is what a Quebec federalist who usually supports the central government said.

Now, let us see what the people in the education area had to say. Mr. Roch Denis, president of the Fédération québécoise des professeurs d'université, said: "The federal government is sprinkling grants here and there, just to make its meddling in the education area a little more legitimate".

Mr. Pierre Tessier, vice-chairman of the Conference of Rectors and Principals of Quebec Universities, said the exact same thing.

And I could go on and on and quote the president of the Centrale des enseignants du Québec, Mrs. Lorraine Pagé, Mr. Gérald Larose

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and many more. The harshest criticism came from Mrs. Lysiane Gagnon, who describes the whole situation quite well. She is not known as a sovereigntist, at least, you cannot tell from her writings. She said: "Ottawa can praise its famous zero deficit as much as they want, the real question is how they managed to get rid of the deficit. Answer: It was easy, they did it on the backs of others. They only had to dump it onto the people below them".

She compares the millennium scholarship fund to candy the federal government is handing out to gain maximum visibility. A direct gift to citizens brings in more in terms of votes than sending a comprehensive envelope to provinces". For all those who would submit that the federal government has a role to play in that area, she writes "Contrary to the federal theory, it really is interference, as indirect as it might be, in the content of education".

Here is what she says in her last paragraph "If Mr. Chrétien was in the least sincere in his desire to stimulate education, he would have helped schools through the governments that have jurisdiction over them. But of course we understand that in terms of votes it is more profitable to hand out cheques with a maple leaf on it to students, all the more so because they, unlike the children in elementary schools, have the right to vote".

That sums up the political ploy very well. We see here a government more concerned with visibility than efficiency.

I will conclude by moving an amendment to the motion put forward by my colleague for Lac—Saint-Jean. I move:

That the motion be amended by inserting after the word "censure" the following:
"vehemently"

For this interference in the area of education has to be censured vigorously.

The Deputy Speaker: In the opinion of the Chair, the amendment is in order.

• (1045)

[English]

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North—St. Paul, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the information of the member who just spoke and before we agree to the amendment, let me remind the member that in the budget, in case he missed it, the foundation announced would be at arm's length from the federal government. It is on page 79 of the 1998 budget plan.

Second, the Council of Ministers of Education Canada representing provincial governments as well as the post-secondary community will have a role in identifying directors.

Supply

Third, the legislation creating the foundation will provide the administrative flexibility required to meet the partnership objective. Last, the foundation will also have the authority, subject to mutually agreed needs, merit and mobility criteria, to contract with appropriate provincial authorities.

There is that flexibility envisioned for the foundation and there are also the partnerships with the provinces. There is nothing to fear.

We have to focus on the fact there is \$2.5 billion from the federal government to help 100,000 Canadian students across the country.

How can the member still refuse to see the beauty of the millennium fund?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Brien: Mr. Speaker, that question allows me to deal with another aspect of the issue. The millennium fund is nothing more than the political legacy of the prime minister, who wants to leave his name on something before retiring. He will probably sign all the cheques to students for the 10 next years to make sure that he is remembered in some way after his retirement.

But I ask the hon. member, since he seems to have missed the essence of my speech, does he really think that all the people questioned on the subject or who took position on the fund, like the vice-president of the Conference of Rectors, did so without thinking or without even looking at what was said in the budget speech? Of course they knew what they were talking about.

Last week-end, the *Gazette*, which cannot be suspected of supporting Quebec's sovereignists, took exactly the same position as we did when it declared that Quebec's Deputy Premier, Mr. Landry, was right and that Ottawa should put the money into transfer payments instead, which could then be used to cover expenditures in education.

A foundation managed by government's chums will not change anything. They make me laugh with their speeches on flexibility. Before concluding on this point, I will quote for the hon. member Pierre Elliott Trudeau, the great federalist mentor who is a source of inspiration to him and his colleagues. This is from something he wrote in the *Action nationale*, before he entered federal politics.

He said this about the federal government "This government is clearly guilty of going against the principle of proportional taxation, which underlies our federal system. It collected moneys for education, which is not under its jurisdiction. That money, left to the provinces, could have been used or not to fund universities, depending on what the electorate and the government in each province wanted".

These are the words of Pierre Elliott Trudeau. Did his opinion change since then? Maybe a little. But before entering partisan politics and being subjected to all kinds of lobbying here in Ottawa, that is what he deeply felt.

I conclude on flexibility. In Quebec, we know perfectly well what it means. Flexibility means leaning always on the same side, that is toward Ottawa. We want nothing to do with that kind of flexibility.

Mr. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member talks about a constitutional cancer in relation to the spending power. When he was a minister in Ottawa, his mentor, Lucien Bouchard, spent \$1 billion on literacy. If the federal government had not used its spending power, there never would have been a national health system. We could not have invested in universities or in the student loans and scholarships program since 1961.

Does the member believe it is more important to invest directly in reducing student indebtedness instead of engaging in petty politics and working for Pauline Marois, who cannot do her job? Two thousand students and 2000 professors agree that she cannot do her job.

• (1050)

Mr. Pierre Brien: Mr. Speaker, we have just heard the president of the flag committee of the Liberal Party of Canada in Quebec say, in his great political wisdom, that, if it were not for the federal government, there would not be any health system or universities in Quebec. I think no one will be fooled by that statement, which makes as much sense as its author.

In conclusion, many people in Canada and Quebec tried to use the Meech Lake accord to cure the constitutional cancer I referred to with regard to the spending power, but all the efforts to limit the federal government's spending power were killed by the members across the way.

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Secretary of State (Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to mention to the House that the agency of which I am responsible is no longer known as the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, but as the Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions Agency.

I am pleased to rise today to speak to the motion brought forward by our colleagues from the Bloc, a motion which, once again, if one analyses it—and it need not be a thorough analysis—is designed essentially to deceive the people of Quebec and to launch a constitutional debate on a fundamental issue. Moreover, the Bloc wants to do that at the expense of future generations, of students who, tomorrow, will form the Canadian society that we are building today.

This motion talks about the Canadian millennium scholarship fund as well as national testing in education. Let us begin with the Canadian millennium scholarship fund.

I think that not only is the government making a noble effort, but its vision is also extremely noble. On the eve of the next millennium, we had the opportunity to invest in infrastructure projects, which are strictly brick and mortar projects. It is not that these projects are not important, but we also had the opportunity to invest in future generations to ensure that Canada can enter the 21st century with pride, knowing that our young people are well equipped to face the new challenges that lie ahead.

These challenges are legion. First of all, we have to prepare our young people and give them the tools they need to compete in the knowledge based economy. Secondly, there is the issue of globalization. Obviously, this is no longer a utopian concept, no longer hypothetical. Globalization has come to our society, to all of our communities. Whether we live in the regions or in large urban centres, we must all position ourselves to face the new realities.

When we talk about the millennium scholarship fund, we talk basically about a vision, about giving our young people the tools they need to deal with the new realities of the 21st century.

Similarly, the strategy outlined in the budget of my colleague, the Minister of Finance, is aimed at giving all Canadians equal opportunities and access to continuing education.

We are taking measures to support the provinces. As we know, education is a provincial jurisdiction and the budget measures are intended to support the provinces in areas related to education but which also come under the responsibility of the federal government. We want all Canadians to benefit from the educational resources made available to them by all the provinces, including Quebec.

• (1055)

Members across the way say that the millennium scholarship fund is an intrusion in an area of provincial jurisdiction. Let us take a closer look at this fund.

The purpose of the fund, which amounts to \$2.5 billion over 10 years, is to enhance learning opportunities. Each year, some 100,000 Canadians will benefit from this fund and enjoy better access to post-secondary education.

An equally important aspect is the fact that the government has set up the fund so as to promote co-operation with the provinces and avoid any form of duplication. What does that mean? It means that basically we have created an independent foundation based on partnership. The members of this foundation will come from all walks of life. The mandate given to them by the government is to hold consultations.

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They will, of course, consult the private sector, the academic community and above all the student population, which is the most directly concerned.

Members who say that the foundation will be encroaching on provincial jurisdictions do not know what they are talking about, for, at this time, the plans call for a foundation whose board of directors will hold consultations and establish procedures based on rules which have yet to be defined.

Another important fact is that the mandate of the foundation gives it enough flexibility to conclude agreements with the provinces. This means that ultimately the foundation could use all the channels put in place by the provinces.

Let us take Quebec, for example. If memory serves, the province opted out in 1964 and implemented its own scholarships program. Since then, it has added a process for analyzing students' needs.

The way the foundation is set up, it could use the channels put in place by Quebec to avoid any duplication.

My question is very simple. If, as a Bloc member just mentioned, they do not mind seeing Canadian flags in Quebec, I wonder why they are making such a fuss about the fund, given that its operation will fully respect Quebec's jurisdiction, particularly if it uses the existing channels.

An hon. member: Why not to the students?

Hon. Martin Cauchon: The answer is very simple.

Earlier, someone spoke about a contagious disease spreading on this side of the House. I must say that, across the aisle, in particular amongst Bloc members, an illness is also spreading—

Mr. Denis Coderre: But it is not contagious.

Hon. Martin Cauchon: No, thank God, it is not contagious. It is not a contagious disease in the sense that the type of nationalism they have developed is not shared by everyone in the province of Quebec. Theirs is basically a doctrinaire nationalism intent on getting Quebec to break away.

This nationalism is ultimately designed to divide, divide the country and divide the Quebec people among themselves, which is an aberration. On the other hand, the type of nationalism that we on our side advocate is one which includes all Quebecers and is designed to ensure that it can have an impact both domestically, within the Canadian federation, and internationally.

I will conclude, as I can see that time is quickly running out. The issue of national testing was raised. There again, I think they cannot distinguish between facts and their dreams, aspirations and even fantasies. All they are trying to do is to make sure the system

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does not work. The Canadian government is blamed left and right for all that is going wrong in the world.

• (1100)

In education, regarding national testing, we do not want to establish national tests. That is a totally false statement. We want to accentuate co-operation between the provinces in developing tools of comparison, which will contribute not to standardizing but to adjusting their education systems, ultimately to provide better education for their students, who are the next generations.

In closing, I think that, with respect to the Canada millennium scholarship fund in particular, the Canadian government has done an outstanding job. The work accomplished by my colleague, the Minister of Human Resources Development, who is meeting today with his provincial counterparts, is also praiseworthy as it is designed to strengthen the Canadian social union, and this is a fine effort.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, the secretary of state surprises me. We must not forget that this is the secretary of state responsible for regional development in Quebec. He wants to know right off who initiated the debate and how such a motion came to be made.

We moved it, because the federal government initiated it by bringing in the millennium fund, which intervenes directly in the education sector. The federal government does not recognize its own Constitution. This is the first thing we can say about such remarks.

The second thing concerns the minister himself. I find it shameful that the minister responsible for regional development in Quebec is promoting the millennium scholarships instead of returning the money through transfer payments. Our regional education networks—the University of Quebec campuses in Rimouski, Lac-Saint-Jean and Abitibi and cegeps throughout Quebec—are being strangled by the federal cuts. For every dollar cut by the Government of Quebec in health care and education, 75 cents comes from the federal government.

How can this minister, responsible for regional development in Quebec, rise and tell us that it is better for his government to put money into the millennium scholarships and let Quebec's educational institutions shrivel and do so in the knowledge that it will threaten the situation in Quebec and deny the province vital strategic advantages? I have great difficulty understanding the minister's position.

For my last point, I will use his own words. He talks about Bloc Quebecois members, who may or may not be contagious. I say that we were quite infectious, because our position was caught by Alain Dubuc, the editorialist of *La Presse*, the spokesperson for all of the

university rectors throughout Quebec, and the Liberal Party of Quebec. You are familiar with this party. It is the federalist party that hopes to again form the government in Quebec and is asking you the same questions we are. The Quebec Liberals are telling you this, as are all the economic stakeholders in Quebec.

I will conclude my remarks here. I wonder whether the secretary of state responsible for regional development is not contradicting himself in opposing the consensus of Quebecers, which, in this House, is expressed by the members of the Bloc Quebecois.

Hon. Martin Cauchon: Madam Speaker, what is interesting about the members of the Bloc Quebecois is that, when they are told the truth in a very rational way, they themselves become irrational. You just saw my colleague opposite; he really seemed to be at a loss for words.

In fact, that is typical of the reaction members of the Bloc have each time my colleague, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, speaks very calmly and very rationally about fundamental issues. Unable to respond to these sound arguments, the members opposite become completely irrational.

However, the member made an interesting point. I want all Canadians to understand, particularly in Quebec, that the Canadian government is indeed involved in the areas of post-secondary education, health, assistance to student and welfare through the Canada health and social transfer, which was reformed when we came to power in 1993. This transfer allows us to maintain a good standard of living everywhere in Canada.

• (1105)

Furthermore, it is interesting to see that, the more we tell the truth, the more the members opposite raise their voices. It is also important to note that, when we were re-elected last year, one of the first things we did was to increase the CHST, to increase transfers to the provinces following a request that was made to that effect.

We have been hearing nasty things from the opposition. If the members of the Bloc are serious and they are really making this a jurisdictional battle, based on what I said earlier, the foundation could be expected to use the channels already put in place by the province of Quebec for student loans—which means that it would respect Quebec's jurisdiction.

Why then are they so upset? Only because they do not want to have a federal presence in Quebec. When people see the benefits of the federal presence in Quebec, it threatens the Bloc's wonderful dream of separation, which is not shared by all Quebecers.

[English]

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I am glad we have an opportunity to talk about education for young people in Canada in terms of what the government has

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and has not done and what the federal government should and should not do.

The Reform Party has had a longstanding and strong commitment to education for Canadians, to retraining for older Canadians and to post-secondary education for younger Canadians. The 1993 election was the first federal election we participated in on a national basis.

Madam Speaker, I am sorry but it is very difficult for me to speak with the noise in the House. Could I ask for the co-operation of hon. members.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): Yes, the member is quite right. She has a right to be heard. Therefore, I will ask all members to show a little respect.

[*English*]

Ms. Val Meredith: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like you to check for quorum because I do not see any Liberals in the House and I am not sure there is a quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): We will check for quorum. Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Calgary—Nose Hill.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: Madam Speaker, Reform has consistently affirmed the critical importance of education to Canadians and to Canadian society. During the 1993 election campaign, even though we knew there was a huge deficit, that we were running in the red, we campaigned on no cuts at all to education and health. Even though the Conservative government had put us far into the red, we knew those were programs that had to maintain support.

During the last election we campaigned on restoring some of the terrible cuts to education and health care made by the Liberals. Our commitment to education has been strong and consistent and will continue to be.

I will read from the Reform policy on education. The Reform policy believes that the federal government should: one, transfer the funding of post-secondary education to the provinces; two, promote and stimulate research and educational excellence in the national interest through public and private research grants; and three, institute a federally funded income contingent loan plan that is as near to being interest free to students as is possible.

• (1110)

Our policy also states that the Reform Party supports national standards in all levels of education and apprenticeships.

Through co-operative interprovincial agreements, the federal government should foster: one, the development of national standards in education and vocational training; two, stronger partnerships among higher education institutions, professional associations and public authorities, business and other organizations that have a stake in the quality of higher education and research; and three, internationalization in post-secondary education, because of course we operate in a global society.

I would like to put on the record and say to Canadians watching this debate today that education is a very, very critical issue for our country. Reform has very strong and vigorous policies to make sure that we do not slip behind in this important area of Canadian life.

I also have a few words to say about the Reform position on respecting provincial jurisdiction. Section 93 of the Constitution states that in and for each province, the legislature may exclusively make laws in relation to education. We believe that the Constitution means something and that the framework for how our country should operate should be respected. The Reform Party respects the constitutional jurisdiction of the provinces in relation to education.

Reform has put forward an alternative vision to unify our country. It is an alternative to the status quo federalism that has brought the present instability into place. It is an alternative to the separatists just giving up on the country. It is an alternative that says let us give the powers to the provinces that would allow each province to best take advantage of and manage the unique opportunities and needs of that individual province.

The reason we have put forward this alternative vision is that our country needs the kind of flexibility we have been talking about. We need to respect provincial jurisdiction in the area of education.

The Liberal record in the whole area of education is not a happy one. In fact it is a tragic record. It is a record of slashing and burning and destroying the strength and stability of this country's educational institutions.

In the last four years the Liberals have cut \$7 billion from essential transfers to support post-secondary education. We know the tragic results of the Liberal gutting of this important area of Canadian society: difficult and limited access to post-secondary education; high student debt; and real fear and concern among young Canadians about getting a proper education.

The Liberals have also slashed support for essential research that is carried out by our educational institutions. Medical research alone, much of which is carried out at our universities, has been cut 13% by the Liberals since 1995.

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Because the Liberals are so insatiable for money, they are now forcing students with part time jobs or summer jobs to pay into the EI system even though they cannot collect a dime. They are taking money from students who desperately need it for their education to put into an already bloated surplus in the EI fund.

The Liberals have continued with high taxation and debt policies which have led to a 16.5% unemployment rate for youth. Our students are not only struggling to get an education, but even if they do manage to get one, they are also very fearful about building any kind of future.

The Liberals are heavily taxing training programs that are provided to older Canadians by companies and businesses. They call them a taxable benefit rather than encouraging this kind of training and retraining. This tragic record of this government is certainly deserving of censure and in that I think all members of the House should concur.

• (1115)

There is an interesting development which began in 1967 called the Council of Ministers of Education. It is a good example of provincial partnerships where all ministers of education in the country, from all the provinces and territories, meet regularly on a co-operative basis. They began to give national tests in 1989. I notice that the Bloc motion talks about national tests. I would like to say a few words about that.

In 1994 the federal government helped the Council of Ministers of Education with their national testing program to the tune of \$1.5 million. I guess the Bloc does not like that kind of help by the federal government since they are condemning this kind of action, but the Quebec Minister of Education is very much in favour of this kind of testing. She is a member of the Council of Ministers of Education and was present in 1993 to approve something called the Victoria declaration.

Allow me to quote from the declaration, which was approved by Quebec's provincial government along with all the other provincial and territorial governments. "We are placing a priority on the following activities", one of which is "a new joint Council of Ministers of Education and Statistics Canada", a federal institution project to develop pan-Canadian indicators of education performance, including such measurements as completion rates for all levels of education, successful transition to work and student, educator and public satisfaction". The CMEC also operates a Canadian information centre for international credentials in collaboration with the federal government.

My point is that the Bloc would have us say that the federal government has absolutely no legitimate role in the area of education. I do not believe this is the case. The federal government should ensure secure funding for education, should make sure we have strong research grants, should use its resources in assisting the setting of national standards, should facilitate and work together for partnerships with business and industry, professional associations and international bodies.

I believe that the Bloc motion is misguided. Certainly the federal government has badly fumbled the ball in the whole area of education but it does have a role to play. That should be strengthened and made better, not done away with altogether.

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it was very sad when the Reform member said that the record of the government is a tragedy in terms of post-secondary education when she spoke of the research cut and so on. If we had followed what the Reform Party suggested back to when we started in 1993, that would be a tragedy.

It is known that we had to share in the reduction of the deficit, and for that Canadians did sacrifice. Now that we have achieved a balanced budget, why can Reform not acknowledge that the millennium fund is truly a breakthrough budget as the president of Canadian universities and colleges has said? Why can Reform not acknowledge that such funding has been increased with the present budget? Why do they continue to dwell on the past when the present is already in progress? The member is smiling. I hope that is a smile of approval.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: Madam Speaker, it is a smile of disbelief. It is very sad to have to point out the government's record in the area of education. Its recent past slashing and burning of funding for education and research is a fact. The Liberals have now given back a few pennies and want to forget about the slashing and burning of the past. That is not going to happen because students and Canadians who are in training deserve better than that. This millennium scholarship fund is something that does deserve to be talked about. I wish I had time.

• (1120)

The Liberals are trying to gloss over the fact that they have cut \$7 billion from health care and post-secondary education and are replacing it with \$325 million a year next millennium, not even now. Also, this money will help only 6% of students in Canada. The other 94% will go without any assistance.

The Liberals talk about a millennium scholarship fund, which is really about the Prime Minister using taxpayers' dollars to boost his own profile and not about helping students, deserves nothing more than being treated as a joke because that is what it is for students.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have listened to the speech made by my colleague from the Reform Party. There were things in there with which I more or less agree, but something made me jump from my seat.

She said that the federal government should perhaps establish national standards but that the private sector should also establish standards in education. What kinds of standards could the private

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sector set in philosophy, history, literature and certain areas of social studies?

I am under the impression that we no longer live in a country where decisions are made by the elected members, and that we will soon find ourselves with a board of directors instead of a parliament. In the end, we will not be citizens any more, but mere consumers. Those of us who are not fit for business will not be fit for anyone. At some point, I think we will have to come back to more human values so that we have not only consumers but also citizens in this country.

[*English*]

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: Madam Speaker, it is interesting what other people sometimes hear when you talk. I am happy that the member has given me a chance to correct a misconception that he obviously has about my speech.

I said that the federal government should assist with co-operative initiatives between business, educational institutions, industry, professional associations and international bodies in setting standards for our workers. That does not mean that the private sector alone should be setting standards.

It does mean that we need to have their input because in the private sector there are organizations that utilize the skills and abilities that we gain from our educational experiences. We need to know from the private sector who does the hiring and firing: what do you need, what skill sets are appropriate, what are you willing to pay for, what will give our workers good jobs with good incomes and therefore some future security. The private sector input is critical but that does not mean it should be given exclusive jurisdiction in setting standards. If the member got that impression, of course that is incorrect.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise today as the education critic for the NDP to present our party's views on this motion presented by the Bloc Quebecois in their opposition day motion.

First, the NDP sympathizes with the frustrations that are expressed in this motion that we are debating today in the House. I think there is a great sense of frustration not just from the Bloc but also from other political parties, and more important from the people of Canada and from students who have been affected by a very great crisis in post-secondary education in terms of how the announcements were made about this millennium fund.

We have to recognize that the millennium fund that has been the showpiece of the Liberal budget was announced with absolutely no consultation. There was no consultation with the provinces. There was not consultation with professionals nor with students in the post-secondary educational field. This announcement came out of the blue after the throne speech, allegedly from the Prime Minister as his legacy to his term in political office. We have to ask the question, is that any way for the government to do its business?

I heard a member from the government ask earlier why is the opposition shouting so loud about this motion and about the millennium fund?

• (1125)

Opposition members, certainly those in the NDP, are shouting loud because we understand that the millennium fund has more to do with political grandstanding, has more to do with political image making, than it does with solving the very deep crisis that we have surrounding post-secondary education in Canada.

The millennium fund was announced to stave off the severe and growing criticism that has come from students, academics and our post-secondary educational facilities because of the crisis that we have.

Let us talk a bit about the funding.

We have heard that this fund will be \$2.5 billion. That sounds to me like an enormous amount of money. I cannot even visualize what \$2.5 billion looks like. However, I do understand this. By the time this fund begins in the year 2000, we will have lost \$3.1 billion from post-secondary education. The \$2.5 billion will only begin, over a 10 year period, at \$250 million a year.

We really have to put this into context and understand that because of what the Liberal governments have bled from the system, their slash and burn approach to post-secondary education, we have lost billions of dollars. This announcement of \$2.5 billion does not come anywhere close to replacing what has been taken from the system.

The figures are well known. The millennium fund will help approximately 7% of Canadian students. We are talking about 100,000 students a year. What is more serious is that the choice the government made to hand out cheques to students will not address the systemic problem which we have in post-secondary education.

The millennium fund and the other measures which were announced will not decrease tuition fees or set the stage to ensure that tuition fees will remain stable. What the government chose to do was to help in a very small way students who are facing an increasing debt load without increasing funding by way of transfers to the provinces.

The other question which needs to be addressed is that we still do not know whether the millennium fund will be a needs-based program or whether it will be a scholarship program. Every indication is that it will be a program based on scholarship. Again this is a mistargeted, misdirected program which does not address the key issue of students who are in financial need because of skyrocketing tuition fees which are a direct result of lack of government funding.

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Another concern which we have in our party, and certainly one which I have heard from students in my riding of Vancouver East, is over the complexity of the system. A whole new level of grants or scholarships is being put into place. It is a privately run foundation. I pity the poor student who has to figure out what it is they are able to access, even if it is a few hundred dollars, under the new system.

The concern which I believe is the most serious is that the government has set up a private foundation to administer the millennium fund. It has already been stated that the president or the chair of the new foundation will be the CEO of Chrysler Canada. I believe there is a real danger that this government is taking us down the slippery slope of privatization and corporatization of post-secondary education.

The government should have restored public funding and public confidence to these facilities, to the universities, colleges and technical institutions which are crying out due to the lack of provincial funding caused by the lack of federal funding.

What we now have is a privatized foundation which will be setting the direction, the criteria and the rules which we will not be privy to. We have no idea what they will be. They will be left to the private foundation to decide and there will be a creeping and growing corporate influence.

Members of our party have listened very carefully to what students and academics in the educational community have said in Canada. We have been listening. I want to ask the government why it has not been listening. The message from students and others in the field has been loud and clear. In fact, the leadership which has been shown by organizations such as the Canadian Federation of Students and provincial education ministers has been loud and clear. The Liberal government has turned a deaf ear to the pleas which have come from that community.

• (1130)

What we needed to see and what we wanted to see was national standards in terms of the budget and a new era for post-secondary education. We believe that passionately in the NDP. We need a federal government that is willing to work co-operatively with the provincial and territorial jurisdictions, including the people of Quebec and the Government of Quebec.

We must have a new national standard for accessibility in post-secondary education. That is something the government has not been willing to canvass. It has not been willing to sit down at the table to work out a co-operative and collaborative approach with provincial jurisdictions or to say that federal money will be tied to accessibility for students to ensure they have access whether they are low income or are affluent.

Right now the tragedy is that basically education is no longer a right. It has become a privilege only for those who have the affluence and the means to afford it.

We would also want to see put forward a tuition freeze. In my province of British Columbia the provincial government has shown leadership for the third year in a row with a tuition freeze. We have called on the federal government to work with the provinces to show that same kind of leadership.

The measures announced in the millennium fund will in no way provide stabilization for tuition fees. We will continue to see them skyrocket.

We have called, students have called and others in the field have called for a national grants program. This is something that we expect to see from the federal government in terms of vision and leadership. It would not be a private foundation but a national grants program in co-operation with the provinces.

The students of Canada and others have been demanding an adequate level of funding. It is scandalous that, despite all the claims by the Liberal government, program spending in the federal budget has actually decreased from \$106.5 billion to \$104 billion. By the year 2000 we will have lost over \$3 billion from post-secondary education.

The students of Canada need help today. They need provincial governments including the province of Quebec working with other provincial governments and the federal government and showing leadership to provide assistance to young people and to ensure accessibility for students. Regrettably the evidence is clear that the latest measures by the Liberal government are not taking us in that direction. They are taking us in the direction of privatization and corporatization of our publicly funded post-secondary education system.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have been listening to the debate carefully. I heard the member talk about the \$7 billion being taken out of post-secondary education, which is absolute nonsense. She is talking about the CHST which includes post-secondary health care as well as social services.

They are also only talking about the cash component. If they included the tax points seconded to the provinces, the tax points increase in value over that same period is probably in the neighbourhood of \$3.5 billion on a net basis. They are simply wrong in the numbers.

As a precise example in the province of Ontario alone the reduction of the transfers to the province of Ontario was only \$850 million, whereas the province of Ontario reduced income taxes at a cost to the coffers of \$4.3 billion.

Provincial priorities seem to be something other than health care or education. They seem to be totally out of line with the priorities of Canadians.

Supply

The member also raised an issue when she talked about freezing tuition. Tuition is a provincial jurisdiction. I do not know whether the federal government can be blamed for all the decisions of the provincial government. She clearly stated that we do not know what the millennium scholarship is all about. She said directly that it was for scholarships. That is not true. I looked in *The Budget Plan 1998* document where it says that scholarships will be awarded to individuals who need help in financing their studies and demonstrate merit. Clearly some merit has to be established so that students will be successful in undertaking post-secondary education, but the principal element also includes the basis of need.

• (1135)

The issue for the member seems to be tuition based, whereas the whole discussion with regard to the Canadian millennium scholarship fund concerns accessibility. I know her colleague who sits nearby has confirmed the issue is not tuition and student loans. It is accessibility for those Canadians who do not even have the opportunity to go to school.

Would the member at least concede that we cannot, in a year that we finally balance the budget, turn on the taps and do absolutely everything we would like to do?

Rather, we should at least start the process of investment where Canadians can be assured the education of our youth is one of the most important investments we can make for the future of Canada. Accessibility is an important priority. The millennium scholarship fund is dealing directly with the accessibility issue.

Ms. Libby Davies: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I am astounded that the member and the government try to defend the numbers, the billions of cut dollars, whether we talk about education, social programs or a health care system.

The government has no credibility to debate this point. It can throw mud at provincial governments and say that they are at fault. The record shows that because of the debilitating demise of funding for these programs, particularly education, we are now in the crisis we are in.

The member says that somehow the millennium fund should be based on merit, that this is a legitimate issue. I remind the hon. member that what he read from his own material was merit. If students are in post-secondary education they have already gone through that test. They have already gone through the entrance requirement and demonstrated that they have the merit to be there.

The issue the government has to tackle is the issue of financial need. To set up another scholarship program, another merit program, is a totally misdirected political grandstanding exercise.

Mr. Charlie Power (St. John's West, PC): Madam Speaker, the resolution reads:

That this House censure any action by the federal government in the area of education, such as the introduction of the millennium fund scholarship program or national testing.

Our caucus will be voting against it. In the beginning I must say that I agree almost completely with the member for Vancouver East who just spoke. She sort of put the problem with students in perspective. We will be voting against the motion for three or four reasons. However, in reality there is only one reason and that is students.

There is a crisis in student education, student debt loads, student access to employment and educated students who are leaving the country. Any parent or any student realizes that students in this modern age require the best education that is humanly possible to achieve and receive.

That is simply not happening in Canada any more. Somewhere down the road there will be significant problems with our economy, with our society and with our social structure because we have not allowed as many people to become educated to their limit as should have happened in this industrial age, this information age and beyond.

There are supposedly 50,000 high tech jobs that we cannot fill. The Government of Canada actually changes the immigration laws to allow people to come into our country to fill those jobs. At the same time 1.5 million Canadians are unemployed. Of those 1.5 million Canadians, over 400,000 are young people below the age of 25. That is a very significant problem and a real shame. On the one hand we have people who are unemployed and on the other hand we have jobs that go unfilled by Canadian people.

• (1140)

We also have the problem of education. That is where the correlation comes in. Why do we have jobs unfilled and people unemployed? It is because we do not have the high level of education these people absolutely require. There is a direct correlation between employment and education. This is why we have, especially with our youth, an unemployment rate of 18% and over every single day, every single month in every single year in Canada.

Since the government took office we have had an unemployment rate for youth in excess of 18% on average. If we break down the averages and take a look at what the unemployment rate is for the uneducated, we will probably see that for those with less than high school the unemployment rate is in excess of 40% every day, every month in every year.

Education is obviously the means to an end to make the country strong, to allow us to export and to allow us to conduct research and development. We cannot do that with an uneducated populace.

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The problem is so huge that it requires all participants to be involved and to co-operate. When I say all participants, I mean first and foremost the students themselves who must realize the value of an education and what they can contribute to themselves, their families and the country if they are educated.

Parents of all students must be involved and must realize that the best thing they can do for their children is to encourage them in all ways possible to get the best education.

It is also a case where our universities, vocational, trade and technical schools and private schools have to make education as accessible as possible, which means keeping tuition fees under control and providing good research opportunities. It also means provincial governments have to be involved in a very aggressive and meaningful way to make sure that our students are educated to the very best of their individual abilities.

We are voting against the resolution. The Government of Canada has to be involved in showing leadership by supplying funding to make sure that Canada and Canadian citizens, especially those in the weaker financial provinces like Newfoundland, have equal opportunity with every other province of Canada. It should be a joint partnership of students, parents, institutions, provinces and the federal government to try to solve this terrible sickness that has overtaken our education system.

The real reason we are voting against the motion is that we do not think any government or any political party should deny access to funding for students simply because of jurisdictional disputes. The problem is too grave. I sincerely doubt if any parent in Newfoundland, British Columbia or Quebec would turn down lower tuition rates or a scholarship for one of their children if it makes education more accessible and more financially available.

The student situation, as I say, is by far the most pertinent. However funding of post-secondary education has always been a joint venture between the Government of Canada and the provinces. This is not something new.

Nobody in the House would deny that education is and always has been a provincial responsibility. The direction of education within the provinces, the setting of policies and the choosing of curricula are all provincial responsibilities with which we fully agree. We have no intention of encouraging the Government of Canada to interfere in any way with the rights of the provinces to deliver the education system that the people and the government of a province put in place.

I am from the province of Newfoundland and represent St. John's West. I do not see it as a federalist plot to destroy the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador if a cheque comes to a student attending one of our schools that is flying a Canadian flag. We see it as a case where the federal government has a responsibility and if it has the financial wherewithal we will happily take its contributions if it allows more of our students to be educated.

I have a couple of other reasons. We have problems with the millennium fund, but I acknowledge the finance minister's budget at least began to address the problem.

• (1145)

We do not think the millennium fund was the way to do it but I will give credit to the finance minister for identifying in the budget that there is a huge problem in post-secondary education in the country, and at least by recognizing it hopefully he will address it.

I will also give great credit to the student groups of this country who have put significant pressure on all levels of government and all politicians to try to somehow address this very serious problem of the cost of education.

We agree there are serious problems with the millennium fund. The \$2.5 billion will not be refused by any of the students in Canada but the real problem of advanced education is the fact that there is tremendous debtload today. We have 1.5 million students in this country and many of them have never worked a day in their lives except for part time work. This means 1.5 million young Canadians owe \$7 billion. They will spend most of the next 20 years or 25 years trying to repay it.

We think that is the sickness of the Canadian post-secondary education system. It is the reason why we think the federal government should be involved. Somehow we have to make education both accessible and affordable.

The federal government must take responsibility because it has caused this crisis in education by unilaterally cutting back to the provinces on transfers to education and social programs. The cutbacks amount to 37% or well over \$6 billion to education and health care in the last five years. It is a shame because it has simply transferred the tax burden from the federal government which has balanced its books to the provinces which cannot balance theirs. The provinces pass it on to universities, and universities and schools pass it on to students, and students in many cases pass it on to their parents.

There is a very serious problem with our post-secondary situation and the only way to deal with it is to put more money into the system.

We are also against any unilateral action by the federal government. I want to make that absolutely clear to my colleagues from the province of Quebec.

Unilateral action by the federal government is what got us into so much trouble with both health and education. We are not saying, even in the area of national testing, that there should be unilateral action. Our party has recommended it because we see it as a tremendous need for the country to know where our students stack up, whether they are from Newfoundland, Quebec or B.C., and

where Canadian students stack up against those from Sweden, the U.S. and other countries with which we compete.

We are against unilateral action but we are very strongly in favour of co-operation among all the agencies, including the federal government which has leadership and the financial wherewithal to try to resolve the problem of the post-secondary education system in Canada. For those reasons we will be voting against the motion.

Mr. Peter Mancini (Sydney—Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague began by suggesting he agreed with some of the comments of my colleague from Vancouver and I would like to compliment him on his speech. It is always refreshing to see how those of us from the east can clarify the issues in the House.

He did mention the millennium scholarship fund and I would ask him if he would agree with me that by cutting the transfer payments to the provinces for education and then putting a little money in the hands of students what the federal government has really done is make the universities, because they are not getting any increase in funding, compete against each other for the bit of money that will go into the hands of the students.

Consequently universities like Memorial in Newfoundland may end up competing against universities like the University College of Cape Breton in my own riding for the same student base, watering down what they can offer students and losing some of the excellent programs they already have.

Mr. Charlie Power: Madam Speaker, I fully agree. There is now getting to be tremendous competition among universities and even among private schools for the limited amount of funding available.

What the Minister of Finance did was realize there is a tremendous sickness or malaise in the post-secondary system. It is like going to the hospital when you have a brain tumour and a wart on your nose. The Minister of Finance does a little cosmetic surgery, takes the wart off your nose and sends you home while saying you are healthy. In effect you are not healthy, you still have the brain tumour.

The problem of Canadian student debt and accessibility still remains. It has not been dealt with and until it is dealt with we are going to have some significant problems.

• (1150)

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I wish the member for Vancouver East were here because my questions refer to her as well as to the previous speaker from the Progressive Conservative Party. We are talking about a millennium fund that has gained a lot of publicity. I agree with the hon. member for Vancouver East that it is kind of like putting the

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problems mentioned by my hon. friend from the Conservative Party on the back burner.

The information I am getting from students in my province is that devising the millennium fund was politically motivated. This is a politically motivated fund which does not kick in for three years and already has a politically appointed selection board. Does the member think it is possible that in this whole process of it growing politically the recipients will somehow be affected politically?

Does the member not see that as a direct possibility? I am sure the member for Vancouver East would agree that is a direct possibility.

Mr. Charlie Power: Madam Speaker, I agree it is very politically motivated. The student groups we spoke with prior to the budget debate could not understand why there was all this talk about the millennium scholarship. To direct two and a half billion dollars toward scholarships somewhere down the road will at most help 100,000 students or 7% of the total. That is great but there will still be a million and a half students in this country with very serious debt problems. We thought the money could be directed in a different way.

Our members and the members of the Bloc have a right to be suspicious of some of the things the Liberal Party does. There is no question that it can manipulate and finagle any program available. When the Liberal Party of Canada is going to appoint this board I suspect that along the way it will be like the recent Senate appointments. Along the way it might be a little easier to get a scholarship if you are the son or daughter of a prominent Liberal than if you are not. Do not be at all surprised if it happens because that is the way this thing goes on.

I still think the millennium scholarship is not what it could have been. With two and a half billion in taxpayer dollars, all of our dollars, an awful lot more good could have been done. The government could have wiped out close to 50% of all student debt for the one and a half million students in school today with that two and a half billion dollars.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to mention that I will be sharing my time with the member for Rosemont.

The motion by the Bloc member reads as follows:

That this House censure any action by the federal government in the area of education, such as the introduction of the Millennium Scholarships program or national testing.

In moving this motion today, Bloc Quebecois members want to find out whether the federal government still views education as an

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exclusively provincial jurisdiction. If it opposes the motion, the government will once again show its true colours, providing proof positive that, in creating the millennium scholarship fund, it is interfering in provincial jurisdictions.

The federal government is using the fund as an excuse to barge into education, an exclusively provincial jurisdiction, uninited.

The government is obviously not helping Quebec reduce student indebtedness or fund universities and post-secondary educational institutions. It is just after additional visibility. It is obvious to everyone that this program runs directly counter to Quebec's.

We already know that the fund was dreamt up by the Prime Minister and that even his most influential ministers could not persuade him to change his mind. I think that the term ego trip says it all.

One has to wonder whether the Prime Minister is prepared to put everything on the line just so he will have a place in Canadian history books. I can tell the House that his latest whim will be written up something like this:

Shawinigan, 1934; destroyer of Canadian unity, henchman to Pierre Elliott Trudeau, and king of federalist propaganda. His last act as Prime Minister of Canada was to create the millennium fund, a huge blunder.

• (1155)

Enough pleasantries. I must now set the record straight, for the year 2000 is right around the corner.

I would like the Prime Minister and his government to understand the reality of today's young people. Not all that long ago, I was a student myself. Thanks to the Quebec government's system of loans and bursaries, I was able to get my degree and thus improve my chances of a job.

Needless to say, I still have debts, but I am nonetheless far better off than many others, because I am working. My purpose in saying all this is to point out that debt is the main concern of students.

So when the government refers to scholarships based on some criterion of excellence, it is obvious that it is way out in left field. But that is excusable, because it has not been tuned in to the reality of the people of Quebec for a long time—if ever it was, that is.

All the Prime Minister's predecessors agreed that education ought to be administered by the provinces. Even Pierre Elliott Trudeau, not a sovereignist, or at least never an avowed one so far, said the following back in 1957, in connection with government intrusion into education: "We are entitled to suspect the federal gifts of being in bad faith—which is insulting for the provinces—and contrary to the principles of representative democracy".

If the federal government really wants to help young people, and in particular to ensure them of a future, thus reducing their debt load, why does it not try to create jobs for young people? One more promise we will never see kept. My generation has had its fill of empty promises.

Young people are not fools. They do not want to turn down generosity, no matter where it comes from. But as the president of the Fédération des étudiants universitaires du Québec so aptly put it, "The greatest possible number of students must be reached, and the system best placed to meet that objective is the Quebec student aid system".

I will repeat his words more slowly, so that the Prime Minister and his colleagues can grasp them fully: "The greatest possible number of students must be reached, and the system best placed to meet that objective is the Quebec student aid system".

In a federation, whether it qualifies itself as renewed federalism or not, where education is an exclusively provincial jurisdiction, the situation becomes complicated. This time, the big bad separatists cannot be blamed because even the other provinces do not agree with the eligibility criteria. The government might be well advised to listen. Worse yet, to be sure Quebec would not withdraw from the millennium scholarship program, the federal government went as far as creating an independent foundation. It smacks of bad faith and is oddly similar to Option Canada. I wonder if students will receive their check even before they apply for it. As far as I am concerned—and there are many others like me—this is clearly another federal propaganda trick played on the back of students.

Would it not have been preferable to help institutions or simply transfer the money to the provinces? Oh, no. What the federal government wants is uniformity from coast to coast, wrapped in the Canadian flag.

For my part, I see it as provocation. The Quebec people is getting used to provocative manoeuvres on the part of the federal government, but enough is enough. This operation seduction does not take into account the root cause of the problem, namely the massive cuts in transfer payments.

The government claims it had to make choices according to priorities. Its own priorities. Does its millennium scholarships fund mean that encroachment in a field of provincial jurisdiction is one of its priorities? What happened to its commitment to create jobs and fight against poverty?

If the budget reflects the government's priorities, does it mean that women are not a priority? I must remind the government that women were unanimous in asking for an increase in the Women's Program budget. But I forgot, this government's priorities are areas of provincial jurisdiction, however the Women's Program is a federal program. What a pity!

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I would like to add that students did not ask for such a program. What they demanded was for transfer payments to the provinces to be restored at the level they were before the finance minister hacked them out.

Why not listen to people's demands instead of catering to the Prime Minister's whim? I can hardly wait for the day.

• (1200)

Mr. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am somewhat disappointed with the rhetoric because, fundamentally, the most important thing is to ensure that we can reduce student debt loads. We are in a knowledge and information era and the important thing is indeed to ensure that we can establish an opportunities strategy. Therefore, we are not dealing with skills, but with accessibility.

I have a few short questions for the member. First, does she think that the loans and grants system is exclusively provincial? I already have the answer, but I want to see if she knows it.

Second, does she think it would be appropriate for Lucien Bouchard to go around trying to play politics with a bunch of cheques with the Quebec flag on them when 90 per cent of that money would come from the federal government? Does she not agree that her first priority is not the students, but in fact ensuring that Quebec's separation is promoted once again?

If she believes we should work toward reducing student debt loads and for greater accessibility, why does not she support the government in its millennium fund initiative? The very day it was announced, we saw what students thought of it, not people who have titles or who have infiltrated the system because of the separatists. What did students say? "We are not interested in the squabbles of Pauline Marois and others". What are they interested in? In having access to that scholarship. They even asked unanimously that we stop this petty rhetoric because they agree with us on the scholarship issue. I would like to know what the member thinks about all this.

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Madam Speaker, in terms of true demagoguery, this beats everything. I guess the hon. member for Bourassa longs to become Minister of Education.

An hon. member: That's right, at the federal level.

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: I hope it will not be at the federal level. At least not as long as the Bloc Quebecois is here.

I want to remind the hon. member for Bourassa of what the editorial writer for *La Presse*, Alain Dubuc, who must not be a sovereignist, had to say: "This does not justify the reflex, the

paternalistic approach of those who say that Ottawa would do better in a field it does not know anything about". I do not think Mr. Dubuc is a sovereignist. I can quote many other people who do not agree with this millennium scholarship foundation.

Again, the federal government is totally disconnected and refuses to listen to what the people in the field have to say. It would be nice if the federal government were to listen to what the people tell them. Michel Auger said: "We will do what we have to do to ingratiate us in the eyes of the public in the short term and later we will dump it onto the provinces when it starts to get too costly or less popular". What does the hon. member for Bourassa think about this?

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned youth unemployment.

The member will probably know that for those youth who have a university education the unemployment rate is only about 6.5%. University students pay approximately 30% of the cost of their education, while taxpayers pay the rest. As well, those who have the highest debt are usually those students who are in professional programs, such as dentistry or medicine. When they graduate they will be earning high incomes.

If we go down the list we will see that high school graduates have an unemployment rate of somewhere in the range of 15%. Those who are high school dropouts, about 52% of all unemployed youth, actually have an unemployment rate which approaches 23%.

If the member is really concerned about youth unemployment and how we can attack it, I wonder if she would like to comment on what she thinks the Quebec provincial government—since she wants to say it is provincial jurisdiction—should do about high school dropouts. Quebec has the highest rate of high school dropouts. It is approximately 40%. These people are Canada's poor in waiting. These are the kids who need help. She thinks education is in the provincial jurisdiction. Why does she not think we should do something about addressing the levels of education even prior to post-secondary education?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his question. I can see that he is also concerned about the unemployment issue. I would like the government to show as much concern and to create jobs, instead of meddling in provincial areas of jurisdiction.

We have nothing against helping young Canadians, quite the opposite, but we do not agree with the way they go about it. So, if the government really wants to act with good intentions, why do they not transfer the money to the provinces, who will see that it is properly managed?

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• (1205)

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to address the opposition motion tabled by my colleague, the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean, that this House censure any action by the federal government in the area of education, such as the introduction of the Millennium Scholarships program or national testing.

After all these years, it is deplorable to have to rise in the House to once again remind the government of the consensus among Quebec's stakeholders in the education sector, under the current and past provincial governments, which has served as the basis for what is now called Quebec's traditional demands in the education sector.

I rise today because this government, in its last budget, is getting involved in education, in an area that is under Quebec's jurisdiction.

I rise today because the Liberal Party is proposing to introduce national standards in education.

I also rise today because the federal government is proposing to young Quebecers solutions that are increasingly centralizing and that are far from addressing their concerns.

I remind you that there is a consensus among all political parties at the Quebec National Assembly, to the effect that the federal government must respect Quebec's jurisdiction over education. Even the former leader of the Quebec Liberal Party, Daniel Johnson—whose job may be taken over by the current Conservative Party leader—recently expressed his disappointment at the announcement of the millennium scholarship program. On February 24, he said "I would have preferred to see Quebec's jurisdiction and that of the other provinces respected".

In addition to being an unspeakable intrusion in an area of exclusive provincial jurisdiction, the millennium fund is far from meeting the needs of young Quebecers.

Allow me to point out some flaws regarding this \$2.5 billion fund. The interest on this fund will be used to grant some 100,000 scholarships, of an average amount of \$3,000, to low and middle income students who will have satisfied a criterion based on merit.

The first problem is the criteria relating to income and merit. The government should know that students from wealthy families do better, partly because they do not have to worry about finding money to continue their education. It should come as no surprise if scholarships are not awarded in accordance with the initial objective of helping low income students.

This is the reason behind this statement of the Fédération des étudiants et étudiantes universitaires du Québec: "If the federal government intends to give scholarships on the basis of merit or

excellence, we can only disapprove. Linking the subsistence of underprivileged students to their academic performance flows from an ideology we cannot endorse".

There is another fly in the ointment. The millennium fund is being created at a time when the privatization of universities is being discussed more and more. Underlying these privatization suggestions is a strong movement that is putting into question the democratization of higher education.

I would be remiss if I did not deal today with a problem that is getting bigger and bigger in this country that is desperately looking for its own identity. We are witnessing a quest for a Canadian nation at all cost. The notion of two founding peoples has now been excised from federalist utterances.

In the same vein, these staunch proponents of federalism refuse to give any status to aboriginal peoples who have already been recognized as nations in Quebec since the mid-1980s.

Like my colleagues have done, I have taken you through what I call the millennium blunders, and I would like to deal now with national standards in education.

Since 1867, Quebecers are in a political straitjacket and a system they never had an opportunity to vote on. We are living ever since in a political entity that is ruled by a constitution of another age that was made with different goals in mind.

If we review briefly the main elements of what Quebecers considered a pact at the time and which is becoming a straitjacket, we notice that the four initial provinces got exclusive power over health care and education. Obviously, this was not done out of any great concern for decentralization, quite the opposite.

• (1210)

The provinces were given responsibility for jurisdictions already occupied by civil society or by the various religious communities, which looked after both education and health services.

Things started to change in the early 1960s I guess. In a very short time, the quiet revolution and the numerous ensuing reforms radically changed the face of education. We went from a denominational system operated by protestant or catholic religious communities to a network of educational institutions established by the government for the stated purpose of improving democracy in education.

I take this brief look back in history today to show that, in Quebec, education is an integral part of our history and our identity as well. This prerogative has always been a provincial jurisdiction, which means that elected members of the Quebec National Assembly have been able to fashion our education system to fulfil the aspirations of their fellow citizens.

Recently, this consensus has fallen into oblivion. We are dealing with a government that does not understand the meaning of traditional demands. According to the morning papers, there is not such thing as traditional demands. Is there such a thing as education? We do not know yet. What we do know is that this government has once again altered the meaning of this expression to directly invade a provincial jurisdiction. In the federal government, education no longer means education, but opportunity.

What opportunity are we talking about here? The opportunity to sign cheques printed with the maple leaf logo for the purpose of scoring political points of course. That is what we were told by a Prime Minister, who was apparently oblivious to the fact he was not making this statement to his pals in his living room but on television in the House of Commons.

This government does not have a monopoly on this centralizing vision of Canada. It is shared by many members of this House. That is why the role played by the Bloc Québécois is so important.

These people cannot live in a beautiful imaginary Canada united by wonderful national standards any more. These national standards, so heavily criticized in Quebec, were one of the election planks of the member for Sherbrooke, who travelled across his beautiful country to promote them. Why not? This is a very popular theme in the rest of Canada.

The provinces have different levels of education. Not all provincial governments invest equally in education, and the federal government, forgetting about Quebec, may legitimately propose national educational standards to solve that problem.

This is what the hon. member for Sherbrooke did in the election platform that bears his name. He sacrificed Quebec in order to win Canadians over. He forgot about Quebec in order to serve his own interests. Avoiding any hasty judgments on his highly likely running for the leadership of the Quebec Liberal Party, as rumour would have it, let us review the ideas contained in the platform which bears the name "the Jean Charest plan for Canada in the 21st century".

The following objectives are set out on page 31 of the document. If the party of the hon. member for Sherbrooke is elected, the federal government will pursue "the highest standard in our schools", "top ten placement in Math and Sciences", "better accessibility to university" and "better transition from schools to the work force".

Now we must ask the hon. member for Sherbrooke if the word "schools" in his vocabulary is connected with "education". And during the next campaign, we will also have to ask him whether he considers university to be part of the Quebec education system.

As for his action plan's reference to the transition between school and work, we need to find out whether this is part of

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manpower training or of education. If the transition is part of manpower training, the hon. member for Sherbrooke is 30 years behind the times in his knowledge of the Quebec system.

If it is an education issue, along with academic excellence and university, he is more than 125 years behind the times, and would be well advised to reread the constitution before he sets foot in any assembly of the Quebec Liberal Party.

Having referred to the general objectives of the Leader of the Conservative Party, let us now go into greater detail. I will now read a quote that particularly surprised me. On page 33 of the Plan, he says:

A Jean Charest Government will help ensure that all Canadian youth receive the basic knowledge and skills they need for their futures by instituting a Canadian Education Excellence Fund.

● (1215)

Again, the last words are "a Canadian Education Excellence Fund". We wondered where the Prime Minister got the idea of a millennium scholarship fund. Now we know. He read the platform of the member for Sherbrooke and leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

What will this fund be used for? Listen to this: it will provide "matching funds to provinces and territories that participate in establishing interprovincial standards for Common Curricula". Yes, interprovincial standards and common curricula in education. This excerpt clearly shows that the provinces that will not take part in this beautiful Canada-wide program will simply not be eligible and will not get anything.

In short, the Liberal Party leader and Prime Minister, and the Conservative Party leader have the same objective: to compel and to force Quebec to fit in the Canadian mould. The member for Sherbrooke wants exactly the same thing as the leader opposite, but he refrains from saying so to Quebecers.

I will conclude by saying—

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry, but the hon. member's time is up.

Mr. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, some people are worried about the next provincial election. They have so little to say about the millennium fund that they are targeting a possible candidate to the Quebec Liberal Party leadership.

Unlike opposition members who keep repeating the same old things, I want to talk about real things. I want to talk about young people, I want to make sure that this budget—

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Interfering is also something very real.

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Mr. Denis Coderre: The public understands. Of course Bloc members are not pleased. I did not hear them talk about tax breaks. They are not saying anything about what the Minister of Finance did to give students a tax break.

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: What does political interference mean?

Mr. Denis Coderre: It is the same thing. The millennium fund is part of a strategy to offer equal job opportunities in the future.

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: You are off to a bad start as minister.

Mr. Pierre Brien: Watch your back.

Mr. Denis Coderre: We are listening to two young members. I am sorry they are playing politics like the others. It astounds me that they are trying to use the rhetoric of the mother house in Quebec City.

Pauline Marois was probably not impressed with the demonstration yesterday in which 2,000 young people and professors banded together to say, finally, that the Government of Quebec and especially the Quebec department of education were not doing their job.

One thing is sure, people understand the subject is not jurisdiction. We are not getting involved at all in the field of education.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Denis Coderre: We are talking about accessibility.

Not only that, work—

Some hon. members: That is not true.

Mr. Denis Coderre: Can you hear them. They are raising a ruckus opposite, because the truth is upsetting, the truth hurts.

I would like to know what the member for Rosemont thinks of the fact some that students said, on the very day of the budget, “We want to look at the program and to have access to these grants”. Why does the member for Rosemont, who was speaking on behalf of young people on the weekend and whose work in other areas I respect, not join with the government on the issue of the millennium scholarship fund, so that, together, those of our generation can give young people access?

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon: For heaven’s sake.

Mr. René Laurin: You have no business there.

Mr. Denis Coderre: The first problem is young people’s debt.

We have assumed our responsibility to ensure young people’s access.

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon: After cutting transfers to the provinces by \$10 billion.

Mr. Denis Coderre: Instead of listening to the member for Quebec who is whining as usual, I want to know what the member for Rosemont think about accessibility.

Is he one of those who think that scholarships are strictly under provincial jurisdiction, when we know that it has been a shared cost program since 1964 and that, if the federal government had not gotten involved, there would have never been a scholarship program?

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Speaker, I can see that the member for Bourassa listened carefully to my speech. He seems pretty worked up.

He just said a lot of things in two minutes. He talked about student debt. Yes, student debt is a reality in Quebec. However, I would remind him that the average student debt is \$11,000 in Quebec, compared to \$25,000 for the rest of Canada.

• (1220)

These are the facts. That means that our scholarship system works. The member opposite talks about accessibility. Does he not recognize that the present system helps only those who are in a particular situation?

It does indirectly what it cannot do directly. But I remind the member that Quebec has a very effective loan and scholarship system and does not need any lesson from the member opposite, let alone from the government opposite.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, before asking my question, I would simply like to correct certain remarks that were made previously in this House by the Secretary of State for Regional Development. I think his figures were wrong and I want to take this opportunity to correct them.

He said that the federal government has increased transfers to the provinces. I want people to know that, in reality, these payments were reduced by \$7 billion. They were at \$18 billion in 1993 and they are now at \$11 billion. That money was invested in education. I wanted to make this correction so that everybody has a good understanding of the situation.

I would like the member for Rosemont to talk again—maybe I did not catch what he said—about student debt in Quebec compared to the rest of Canada. I would like to hear again the statistics he just gave, and maybe he could elaborate on that.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Speaker, just a quick answer. As I have just said, it is true that Quebec students have the smallest debt load—let me quote the figures again—with an average student debt of \$11,000, compared to \$25,000 in the rest of the country. Of course, the whole situation is quite bad, but when we compare our situation to that of others, what the member opposite does not seem to understand is that the system we have in Quebec is rather efficient.

Supply

[English]

Mr. Robert D. Nault (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to say how much of a pleasure it is to get the opportunity to speak this afternoon, not only about one particular component of the Canadian opportunities strategy, the central piece of that particular strategy, but the direction that this government is taking for the betterment and future of the young people of this nation.

There are two themes in the budget that will go down in history as very important turning points. As we all know and will continue to read and hear about in the history books long after we are gone, one is the fact that for the first time in my voting life we have a government which has produced a balanced budget. No matter what the opposition or people feel about what was in it or not in it, that will always be the central theme that people will remember.

There is one other very important central theme and one only in essence because this is the most important budget in our generation as it relates to post-secondary education and to students, that is that this is an education budget.

Those are the two themes in this budget that people will remember the most as years go by. They will not remember the machinations of the Bloc Quebecois or Reform or the Tories saying we should have done this or that. Those are the two themes.

In those themes I want to deal extensively with the Canadian opportunities strategy. In that strategy there is one fundamental issue as it relates to the Government of Canada, and that is access to post-secondary education for our young people today and tomorrow and to help those who have gone through the system in the last few years and have accumulated a very large debt after completing university, college or some other institutional program.

Let us go back just a little bit and look at the most fundamental part of the Canada opportunities strategy, which is the Canada student loans program.

• (1225)

I do not hear members of the opposition complaining about the Canada student loans program which has been giving billions of dollars to students since its inception in the early 1960s. Since 1975 and into 1995, the number of Canada student loans program recipients rose by 148% while university enrolment increased by 54%.

That program, instituted by the Government of Canada, helped generate the access to post-secondary education that was missing before my generation. It came into being at the beginning of my college and university days. There were many people in my age group and a little older who would have never gone to college or university if it had not been for the federal government.

I do not hear the members opposite telling us not to continue with the Canada student loans program because it is a bad program or that it is jurisdictionally unacceptable to be involved in education in that regard because of the provinces. As a matter of fact, they are involved in only one particular aspect today. It is because of their fear that the federal government has again launched another initiative that is going to help students obtain access to education.

I want to read something to our NDP friends who continue to ask why we are putting in a millennium scholarship fund for the year 2000 when there is a need to do something today. I will read what was in the federal budget that will help students immediately. We have recognized that there are some problems as they relate to students not only in accessibility but in planning for tomorrow and for dealing with debts today.

Some of the measures in the budget are easing student debt load; helping parents save for their children's education; promoting lifelong learning by allowing Canadians to make tax free withdrawals from their RRSPs to upgrade their skills and knowledge; and increasing funding for SchoolNet in the community to help bring the information technology into more classrooms and communities across Canada.

Our goal is to continue to introduce steady and progressive reforms to the Canada student loans program to meet those evolving needs.

I want to make sure for the record that people understand when they listen to this debate that it is not just about the millennium scholarship or the Canada student loans program. It is about the whole issue of accessibility. More important, it is about partnership with students, with parents and of course with provincial governments. I put these in their proper order because that is where they belong. The partnership has to be with students, their parents and, lastly, with the provincial governments.

The new measures announced in the budget will do these things. They will provide a new study grant of up to \$3,000 for students with dependants beginning August 1 of this year. Well over 25,000 full and part time students in financial need who must support children or other dependants are expected to be eligible for this grant. For the first time, the government will provide expansion of interest relief to students who are experiencing difficulty making repayments.

Next year graduate interest relief will be introduced for others based on income. It will provide a measure to protect borrowers from defaults and bankruptcies due to high student debt.

As members can see, the Canada student loans program is evolving, changing and improving to continue to allow the children and parents of today and tomorrow the opportunity for post-secondary education. Why should we, as a federal government, be concerned about that? If we listen to the head waiters of the provincial governments in the opposition, they think the federal

Supply

government should not be involved in these things because they are provincial jurisdiction.

We cannot dissociate social policy from economic policy. It is impossible to do that sort of thing. I have said this in the House before and I will say it again: The unemployment rate for those who have a post-secondary education drops to 5%, half the rate of unemployment in Canada. That is the rationale for the federal government being involved in post-secondary education and in access to post-secondary education now and in the future.

• (1230)

A central piece of this strategy besides the Canada student loans program is the new millennium scholarships fund. I appreciate the opportunity the Bloc has given us to promote the Canada millennium scholarships fund and to bring it to the attention of all Canadians. It is a lot cheaper to promote it standing here while people listen than it would be to spend money on sending promotional material and booklets across the country. It is a good saving for taxpayers.

Why would anybody be opposed to a millennium scholarships fund? It is at arm's length from the government. It is a foundation. Those appointed to look after it will be people with experience in education who understand the needs of students across the nation.

An interesting aspect is that the private sector has an opportunity to put money into this foundation. The \$2.5 billion we start with will not be the end of it. We could end up with a \$5 billion foundation for scholarships if the private sector comes to the table to help us and if the provinces see fit when they have surpluses, like Alberta, to put some of their money into the foundation. They could do this instead of whining and bellyaching about what the federal government should not do.

There is one most important attitude which federalists and Canadians should have. For years the federal government has helped in areas of provincial jurisdiction because we believe in partnership. We believe in partnership with citizens, not necessarily with governments. Those are institutions created to serve people.

The millennium scholarships fund, the Canada student loans program and the Canadian opportunities strategy are intended to deal with partnerships with students, partnerships with parents and partnerships with those levels of government that have the fortitude and long term vision to understand what this will mean for future generations and for the country as an economic trader and exporter.

I am thankful for the opportunity to say why this is such an important undertaking. The budget we have just submitted to Canadians will go down in history as the budget that balanced the books for the first time in my generation. It is giving Canadian young people an opportunity to be successful in a global economy.

[Translation]

Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened very carefully to the hon. member. One thing he seems to be forgetting in this debate is that—in the Fall of 1995, I think it was—the House passed a resolution on Quebec's distinct society. As usual, members opposite have forgotten all about it, of course. At the time, we kept saying it was wishful thinking and we have been proven right.

I want to say to the hon. member who just spoke that regional development depends quite a lot on manpower training. He voted in favour of Quebec's distinct society. If we were to go through *Hansard*, we would see that the hon. member has acknowledged it. Quebec, as a distinct society, can adjust its regional development according to its manpower training or can train its manpower according to its regional development.

For instance, if Quebec were to decide to focus its manpower training and education program on the aircraft industry and the federal government, just to please the Reform Party, were to centre its manpower training program on the cross-breeding on corn, this could very well hamper the manpower training and regional economic development initiatives of the provinces.

This is one part of the problem that the hon. member opposite, despite all his good intentions, I am sure, as well as the government tend to forget.

• (1235)

Is it not time for him to recognize that economic development is closely linked to the quality of manpower training? When we talk about manpower training, we are also talking about schooling leading to it. This problem has been completely ignored by the Prime Minister and his finance minister in the budget he recently brought down.

Therefore, my question to the member is this. How does he reconcile the maple leaf, Quebec regional development and the quality of manpower development? Can we find all this in the millennium fund or is it only window dressing to bring young Canadians to realize how heavily subsidized they are by the federal government, that the Liberal Party of Canada is their only hope for salvation, that only through the narrow ways of the Liberal Party of Canada will they go to heaven, and that besides that there is no salvation? This is what the federal government is trying to show us.

This is basically linked to economic, social and demographic considerations. Manpower training should meet our needs. I would like the member to comment on this.

Supply

[English]

Mr. Robert D. Nault: Madam Speaker, I have to tell the member it is obvious I am a strong federalist and I have no reason to be ashamed of such. I am a Canadian first and foremost. I do not have a lot of time for this parochial kind of discussion.

I tell my children and the people I talk to at high schools very quickly that we can be Canadians and we can be different. There is nothing wrong with being distinct.

When I go from northern Ontario across the border to Manitoba, which happens to be a two hour drive, I do not think I am in another country. I do not think I am somewhere distinct even though Manitoba has a very distinct and different culture from northern Ontario. There are a lot of francophones. There are a heck of a lot of francophones in St. Boniface and Richer. In places near Winnipeg there are a lot of franco Manitobans. Many of them are related to me.

The point I am trying to make to the member is if he is disappointed or disagrees with the federal government's involvement, why does the Quebec government take the transfer payments in social programs? We believe as Canadians that we should all have equal opportunity no matter where we live, whether we live in Newfoundland, British Columbia or in Quebec.

It was not too long ago when Alberta was a have not province and the federal government helped it. Now Alberta is helping others. We help Quebec in a lot of ways and we will continue to do that. The millennium scholarships will be given to Quebec students simply because it is the right thing to do for them.

Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham, Lib.): Madam Speaker, for the people watching this debate, I thought it would be instructive just to repeat what the motion is. It says that this House censure any action by the federal government in the area of education, such as the introduction of the millennium scholarships program or national testing.

Since we are talking about education today it seemed appropriate that we look at various report cards. The report card on the educational system in Quebec says that at best, its educational system is mediocre. Many reports confirm this. For example, only one youth in two finishes secondary school grade 11 in the Catholic school commission of Montreal. After Alberta, Quebec has the highest dropout rate of any secondary level in Canada. Thirty per cent did not complete high school. It is 40% in Montreal compared to 15% in New Brunswick. We spend \$7,132 per student at primary and secondary levels, the highest rate in Canada and one of the world's highest with unimpressive results.

• (1240)

It is alarming to me when I hear a number of members from that province stand up and object to our assisting each other in moving along as a country with higher technology.

The Conference Board of Canada has just reported that some of the main problems we have had competing in the world have been because our productivity and our ability to embrace new technologies is lagging behind many of our competitors. A big portion of this lag has to do with access to higher education.

The millennium scholarships program recognizes that a number of children who graduate from secondary institutions for one reason or another find it very difficult to make that leap into post-secondary education. It is for very profound reasons that the federal government has moved in this area. It realizes that our future, our greatest resource, and we used to talk about Canada being a great resource based country and indeed it is, but our greatest resource is between our ears. The budget generally talks to those resources and specifically with the millennium scholarships fund.

I had the opportunity to visit a classroom in Chicoutimi about a year ago. I talked to some of the students and I was amazed by what they told me. They told me that this country is very much part of all of them and they want to continue with that vision of Canada. It makes me feel good today to realize that as a federal government, we can help all citizens of Canada whether they are in Quebec or any other province.

It has not just been the millennium scholarships fund. We have also changed the registered education savings plan. This will have a tremendous impact on parents in that province who want to save for their children's post-secondary education. It is the federal government in partnership with parents and students. A \$2,000 deduction is going to be backed up with a \$400 grant from the federal government.

Who are the benefactors of all these programs? Ideally of course they are the students. But do not forget that money is being spent in post-secondary institutions mandated by the province. The reality is that the money from the millennium scholarships foundation is being paid over to institutions which are mandated by the province.

I do not know why this would concern the hon. members. Do they think they have a possessory right to the grey matter of the people in their province? I do not understand. I would have thought they would be standing here today with us rejoicing in the fact that we want to empower those people to have a great future. That is what this is all about.

My hon. colleague mentioned as well the ability of people to take money out of their RRSPs. We paid a lot of lip service to the concept of continuous learning. We have come to the realization that it is for real. The reality is people are going to change their careers two, three or four times during their lifetime. We have to find a way to make that viable, to make them make those transitions, to make them continue to be useful to their employer. They may not change their actual employment but even within

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their employment, their job descriptions are going to change many times.

This was another positive way in which the federal government could say "We know you are saving money in your RRSP for your retirement, but maybe what you really need is a down payment on improving your skills today". That is the best retirement program people can have. It is going to continue assisting them with their economic well-being during their lifetime. It allows the resources to build up savings for their retirement, \$10,000 in any one year capped at \$20,000.

• (1245)

I do not care if they are federal or provincial governments when it gets right down to it. The reality is governments owe one thing to their people and that is to give them a good education, to give them those resources that are going to help them in the future to secure good employment conditions.

I just read the report card. Why would the members not be rejoicing in moving in this general direction? It is not that we are telling the people in their province what educational programs they can have, what institutions they can sign up for. I do not think anybody would want to have that kind of power. The money is being spent in provincially mandated institutions.

In my riding I have Durham College. It was also mentioned in the budget. The president of the college slapped my back and thought that was the greatest thing. He did not care whether the money came from Ottawa, Toronto or anywhere else. He thought it was great that we had empowered students to get a good education.

I have great difficulty with the members across the way who can actually stand there today and complain about it. It seems odd to me.

The second thing they have complained about is the concept of a national testing program, as if we are going to put everybody in the litmus of a focus and that the federal government is going to pass or fail people across the country. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The program they are referring to is called the national longitudinal survey of children and youth. Although I have not read it intensely, my understanding of this program is basically to go across the country and measure how well children are doing. It is not just education. It is about health and all kinds of other things.

We talk a lot in this room about young offenders. If you go back behind those statistics you will find children of neglect in various forms. Sometimes it is nutrition. It seems to me that as a government if we want to really solve some of these problems we have to get at them before they happen rather than after the fact. The provinces are partners in this and they participate in it.

One of things it does is measure the capacity for lifelong learning skills. It also measures a number of other aspects such as the third international mathematics and science study which is part of this. I presume this is something that really bothers my hon. colleagues. Others are the international adult literacy survey, the pan-Canadian education indicators program. Quebec is a member of a sponsoring association as well as the council of ministers of education of which Quebec is a member.

I am at a loss today as to know what this motion is for and whose best interest it is promoting. I do not see how it promotes anybody in this country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I do not know if I will be able to bring my colleague opposite to understand why in Quebec we demand a different solution to a problem which is different. When the federal government is offering millennium scholarships across Canada it is showing us it knows nothing about the needs of the provinces.

It is as if the federal government had decided to make access to school easier by providing bus transportation for every child in Canada, including those living in the North Pole. It might have been a better idea to provide snowmobiles to students in the North Pole so that they could go to school. It might have been a better idea to provide bicycles for those living downtown and school buses for those living in the suburbs a bit further from the school.

• (1250)

But the federal government, which claims to be quite familiar with the needs of each of the provinces, says: "This year, we will give snowmobiles to everyone so that children can have access to schools, even in summer. There will be no school buses. The federal government is generous, it realized there is a problem with access to the schools and it is offering snowmobiles, whether you like it or not".

What we criticize the federal government for is not that it makes money available for education. We criticize it for wanting to do so by meddling in areas it knows nothing about. If it wants to help Quebec students have better access to education, it should give that money to Quebec, which is more familiar with its own needs and knows how best to ensure that more students have access to education.

Perhaps the member does not know that there are hundreds of thousands of children who go to school in the morning without a piece of toast or a single glass of milk in their stomach. Perhaps the member does not know that, in Quebec, the suicide rate among high school students is one of the highest. Will millennium scholarships reduce the suicide rate in our secondary schools? Will

it increase the number of teachers, who, in some regions, must teach three different classes at the primary level? Will it provide more psychologists and guidance counsellors at the secondary level to help students who are desperate, who cannot find their way or who need assistance and supervision?

Through its transfer cuts, the federal government has taken away from us the means to pay for these student services. We cannot provide them now, because it has taken away the money that it used to give in transfer payments. It has taken it away in the areas where we needed it and it now wants to give it back in areas where the need is less urgent. This is what we are trying to tell the federal government when we say: "Do not intrude in provincial jurisdictions. Give us the money that comes from the same taxpayers and we will take care of these needs, because we know them better than you do". This is all we want.

[*English*]

Mr. Alex Shepherd: Madam Speaker, I heard about bicycles and snowmobiles but I did not hear too much about what we are going to do about this report card.

He said the system worked well before the federal government changed transfer payments.

Once again we are back to the 30% to 40% dropout rate. That is what I am talking about. I am talking about how we can increase the awareness not only in Quebec but throughout the country of the importance of getting a better education.

The millennium fund is just one way of helping. I repeat that the money will be spent in provincially mandated institutions. The course material is provincially mandated.

The federal government has not interfered in provincial jurisdictional. It has made resources available for some students who have the required merit to attend post-secondary educational institutions but who do not have the resources.

Why the member wants to talk about bicycles and snowmobiles rather than defending the best interests of his people is beyond me.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Québec.

First of all, I would like to remind the House of the Bloc Québécois motion before us:

That this House censure any action by the federal government in the area of education, such as the introduction of the Millennium Scholarships program or national testing.

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By moving this motion, the Bloc Québécois has expressed the clear will of all stakeholders in Quebec, including university presidents, student federation spokespersons, union leaders, and well-known federalists.

• (1255)

Mr. Alain Dubuc, editor of *La Presse*, has condemned this federal encroachment in education through the millennium scholarships program. Moreover, the Quebec Liberal Party, which represents federalists in Quebec, pointed out that this kind of scholarship made no sense.

Why is this feeling so unanimous in Quebec? Is it just a matter of safeguarding one's jurisdiction? I do not think so. I feel the issue is much broader than that. Over the last 34 years in Quebec, we have developed, following many rounds of consultations and a debate that have been quite fierce at times, a financial assistance system made up of loans and scholarships to students, so that their average debt load when they graduate is about \$11,000.

Other Canadian provinces did not go through the same exercise, and students there have a much bigger average debt load of some \$25,000. Canadians in other provinces have to find a way out of this problem.

Their solution is to have the federal government take this kind of initiative. It may be the way the rest of Canada wants to go, but it is certainly not what Quebec wants.

What is also clear is the intrusion of the federal government in this area. Government members ask us why we are proposing motions such as the one now before the House, or whether we are trying to start a constitutional squabble. The truth is that the federal Liberals are out of touch with what is happening in Quebec. They cannot understand that this matter was settled long ago in Quebec.

The money must be made available through the transfer payments. This money comes from taxpayers. The federal government does not just print money. It collects this money by imposing taxes and then redistributes it.

What Quebecers want is for the money to be redistributed through transfer payments, because we realize that the cuts made in the last few years have had a severe impact on the education system in Quebec.

Seventy-five cents out of every dollar that the Quebec government has had to cut in health and education since 1994 can be traced back to the federal government's cuts to transfer payments. We are looking for a way to put our hands on enough money so that our educational institutions and our students can have access to the resources they need to meet the requirements of the next decade. We want to train students who are going to succeed, who will be ready to face the labour market and who will be able to adapt to the new realities.

Supply

Quebec has no need for scholarships based on merit. Gifts of \$3,000 or \$5,000 to a minority of students will not do much for Quebec's education system as a whole.

This is a bit like a house owner deciding that next year, he or she is going to invest in repainting the house. His uncle decides he will put up \$5,000, on condition that it is used for a chimney and a fireplace. An attempt is made to explain to the uncle that what the house needs is not a chimney and a fireplace, but paint. But the uncle has a bee in his bonnet, and so does the federal government. It wants its visibility.

I have been a member for four years, but the most astonishing statement I have heard in the House was made only recently. The member for Lac-Saint-Jean, one of the youngest members here, asked the Prime Minister if it was not purely for the visibility that he created the millennium fund. The Prime Minister candidly replied that yes, it was.

This is terrible. They are repeating the same mistakes that were made 25 years ago. They had to be careful for three or four years because of the catastrophic financial situation. But, as soon as there is money available, the first thing the federal government does is say: "How can we rope in a group that is more attached to Quebec than to the Canadian federal system? How can we buy them?" That is what they are trying to use this fund to do.

I think there is an important message for all Quebecers and all Canadians as well in this. It is echoed by the Premier of Ontario, Mike Harris, and by Saskatchewan Premier Roy Romanow. These are not sovereigntists from Quebec, but people living in Canada, people who have read the Canadian Constitution and who say that education is a provincial responsibility.

• (1300)

They too realize they have educational needs that will not be fulfilled by the millennium scholarships. They are telling the federal government the same thing the people of Quebec are telling it. The concrete, realistic, appropriate thing to do would have been to put the money back into transfer payments to the provinces.

To ensure visibility in this regard, you could just have written on the largest poster in the world the amount paid back to the provinces. At least, that would not have been as ineffective as the millennium scholarships will be.

When I hear members suggest that Quebec should let the millennium scholarships be integrated into its system, I cannot believe my ears. The days when Quebecers bent over backwards to please the federal government are over. That is a thing of the past. Today, people want programs to be effective and to have a positive impact. That is what we want.

We have seen Quebec students take to the streets these past few weeks. The staff of educational institutions in Quebec did the same. They are knocking at the Quebec government's door knowing that education is an area under the Quebec government's jurisdiction. In addition, they now realize that Quebec was economically strangled by a choice made deliberately by the federal government not to put the money back into its transfers payments to the provinces and that, as a result, Quebec is caught in the middle between students with substantial debts and educational institutions that need funding to operate, on the one hand, and the federal government, which is turning off the tap, on the other hand.

This is really what today's motion is all about. We are saying that the federal government does not have the right to get involved the way it has been doing for a long time in the education sector. This is no longer tolerable.

Our motion also points out that we do not want national standards. What we have before us does not only reflect a position of the Liberal Party of Canada, but a federal practice that has been in effect for many years.

Regardless of which party sits across the way—positions can vary—the federal bureaucratic steamroller decided a long time ago that Canada should have a national department of education, that these issues should be settled in Ottawa, because the solutions come from Ottawa. Ottawa is the one that understands how things work and how money should be spent. The branch offices will merely have to administer the programs.

Quebeckers do not share this vision of Canada. Nor do most people in the other provinces. People want provinces to be responsible for education. If Quebec and the rest of Canada have a different model, then let us respect what was established in 1964. It was 34 years ago that Quebec developed a successful student loans and grants program.

It definitely has nothing to envy to the federal initiative, considering that, in the rest of Canada, the average debt incurred by students is \$25,000, compared to \$11,000 in Quebec. We can certainly understand that Quebec students would want to have a smaller debt.

But giving money to students by going over the heads of the provinces is not the way to ensure the future of the education system, because it will have a major negative impact on education networks. The money must be made available so that educational institutions can have adequate curricula and provide proper training, and so that students will want to attend these universities, thus alleviating the current problems.

I will conclude by saying that while Quebec has a problem with students dropping out, the federal government is proposing a scholarship program based on merit for those who have successfully pursued their education. This is not what we want in Quebec. We

want concrete solutions to our problems. But the federal government is once again showing it does not have the right solutions. This is what we are saying on behalf of all Quebecers.

Mr. Maurice Godin (Châteauguay, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have listened to my hon. colleague with great interest. It seems to me that there is a common denominator, practically the same in every case, running through several fields.

• (1305)

Taking the application of the 1867 Constitution as one example, we know very well that Quebec and Canada have never managed to reach agreement on this. As far as trade versus free trade is concerned, we clearly remember how Mr. Turner said in 1984 that, if he were elected, he would tear the agreement up. In a word, if Canada is involved in free trade today, it is because Quebec dragged it into it.

Taking Canadian pensions as another example, the Minister of Finance recently stated that he had been dreaming for 30 years of a fund identical to the Caisse de dépôt et placement in Quebec. Today we see Canada moving into another area, education, with the millennium scholarships, once again because of the success we have had in Quebec.

So, the question I would like to ask my colleague is this: is the problem between Quebec and Canada not due to the fact that Quebec is always 25 or 30 years ahead of Canada?

Mr. Paul Crête: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Châteauguay for his comment and question. I do not know whether Quebec is 25 or 30 years ahead of the rest of Canada in all areas. But I do know that different paths have been taken in certain sectors.

This is somewhat of a heritage of the Pearson years. I believe that history might have been very different if Trudeau had not succeeded Pearson. But today we cannot change the past, only the future.

The member cited the Caisse de dépôt et placement as an example. The loan and bursary system might be as well, along with the use of the tax points obtained by Quebec during those years in various sectors.

Yes, in many of these instances, Quebec has performed far better than the rest of Canada. It is not necessarily because Quebecers are smarter than other Canadians, but because Quebec is very aware of the needs in areas such as education, which is under provincial jurisdiction, it had a chance that the other Canadian provinces did not have with regard to loans and scholarships.

Maybe, if British Columbia had decided to opt out 30 years ago, members from that province would join us today in saying that this

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kind of action on the part of the federal government makes no sense at all. I think that, in a sense, the position expressed by Mike Harris and by Mr. Romanow, on behalf of all the premiers, is a recognition of that phenomenon.

Many provinces in Canada have realized that letting the federal government administer their money, letting it decide that federal taxes paid by Canadians will be used in a variety of ways that are not in line with each province's policies, has led to our current failures.

In conclusion, and this may be the most important message today, on this issue, the Bloc is speaking on behalf of all Quebecers. I will quote what Alain Dubuc wrote in *La Presse*. "In spite of growing pressures, the budget does not allow provinces such as Quebec to opt out so they can manage their own share of the \$2.5 billion that the federal government wants to invest in higher education. Nothing in the still vague and undefined project presented yesterday can justify the fact that Ottawa wants to manage these funds itself, other than the desire to be visible and to see a maple leaf on the cheques that students will receive".

There is no greater irresponsibility for a government than choosing visibility over effectiveness, and that is the message we want the government to understand today.

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am keen to take part in today's debate for, as the deputy critic on human resources, I am extremely interested in the funding of education. I am also aware of the real problems in Quebec. What the federal government is doing is not suited to Quebec.

The motion tabled today by my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean focuses on a debate on the importance of the future of education in Quebec and the threat the federal government is posing to the entire system of education in Quebec.

• (1310)

The motion reads as follows:

That this House censure any action by the federal government in the area of education, such as the introduction of the Millennium Scholarships program or national testing.

Why are we so upset by the new measures in the budget the Minister of Finance has just delivered? Because the Minister of Finance, through the creation of the millennium fund, is meddling in a provincial jurisdiction and preventing Quebec from withdrawing from the program with all sorts of shenanigans. We know they are tricky.

They also want to have national testing and this too is clearly an indication of just how meddling the Liberals and the Conservatives can be. This testing reveals the Liberal government's bad faith and bad habit of trying to introduce national testing in education.

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What have they written about it? I will read it to you. It is contained in the action plan on page 30 of the red book written in 1993. So it is not the freshest strategy. This desire of the government to meddle in the jurisdictions of the provinces has been around for a long time. I will read just a short passage. "A Liberal government, in collaboration with provincial governments, will introduce a voluntary National Achievement Test in math, science, and technology so that students and their parents will be able to compare their work in this area and track the progress of our educational systems in meeting the goal of higher achievement for our students in math and science". What business does the federal government have interfering? And they have just told us they do not want any conflict. When you do not want any conflict, you respect your partner.

They tell us they want a genuine partnership, but what kind of partnership is possible with such an associate? This centralizing attitude is not confined to education. Take the drinking water bill, which is a direct threat to the activities planned in this field in Quebec, and the Canadian Securities Commission, which would mean the short or long term transfer of all activities in this exclusively provincial field to Toronto.

What is the government up to and why is it making such a deal of it? Is it trying to win over a group that has to be won over? Is it a question of partisan visibility? This visibility precludes effectiveness. That is the Liberals for you.

They want millennium scholarships to be awarded on the basis of merit. Once again, they will not reach agreement with Quebec because Quebec does not want to focus on merit alone. Need is also important. Is the government really going to alleviate the problem of indebtedness?

For a period of ten years, beginning in 2000, a budget of over \$2.5 billion has been earmarked for the fund. The provinces have just been cut \$10 billion and there are cuts in provincial transfer payments. The figures show that we have dropped from 23.5% in 1992 to 15% today. Provincial transfer payments have been cut by over 8%.

Why interfere in an area of provincial jurisdiction, such as education? I can understand that the other provinces do not have systems as well established as Quebec's, but Quebec is entitled to serious compensation. We have just heard a motion about respect for a distinct society. This will be accomplished not just through words, but also through actions. This government's actions with respect to the millennium scholarships are at odds with its fine words, its empty motions to show us it cares. Quebec was cut \$3 billion to be put towards the millennium scholarships.

Why are they bent on interfering in Quebec's jurisdictions? I think it was a wish to mark the new millennium. As my colleague said earlier, they could just have put up a great big flashy sign pointing out that the federal government was giving \$3 billion, say, to Quebec as it entered the third millennium. But no, it prefers to

go and cosy up to clients, and I find that completely unacceptable and partisan.

• (1315)

Earlier I heard a member opposite telling us "We are well aware of the student debt problem". If Quebec is not aware of the problem, this is not what we are hearing in the field. On average in Quebec the student debt is \$11,000 against \$17,000 to \$25,000 in English Canada, in the other provinces.

As for tuition fees, the Quebec government is well aware they have to be kept very low; they are \$1,700 in Quebec against \$3,200 elsewhere. This is what students are telling us.

Many people are against the creation of the millennium scholarships. The population was polled on this issue. Several stakeholders in the education field told us "This is a waste, a bad strategy". If we were to believe the Liberal members, they hold the key to the truth. They told us a while ago we were talking through our hat.

Polls tell us that 48.5% of the population wants the provinces to manage these scholarships. A meagre 16% said the federal government should manage them. And only 22% said they were designed to help students. This poll was carried out by Sondagem for *Le Soleil* and *Le Devoir*.

Another poll carried out by Angus Reid for *The Globe and Mail*, I do not believe it is a sovereigntist daily, showed that 71% were in favour of prioritizing transfer to the provinces.

That is what the premiers told the Prime Minister at the June conference. But the Prime Minister always goes for half-truths. They talked about the student debt, but they said the issue should be dealt with through an agreement with the provinces. When you want to reach an agreement with someone—as you and I know, this is how it is done in a couple—when you want to agree on something with your spouse you do not play a trick on him or her as the government just did. The way to go about it is to sit down and say what you plan to do. If you are seeking a different arrangement, you know when you are listened to that you are respected; this is not what I am seeing on the part of the government.

Some columnists are not very favourable to sovereignty. We are often told that in Quebec we have sovereigntist plans in mind. Lysiane Gagnon from *La Presse* said "This is a glaring case of duplication". She then added, and I quote "In Quebec, these scholarships will be grafted onto an already well subsidized system with a proven track record. The criteria are different".

Again, how are we going to agree if the criteria used by the federal government and the province of Quebec are different? She adds "Provincial policies will be thwarted".

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What did Alain Dubuc, from *La Presse*, have to say? “The cat is out of the bag”. This is bad federalism and these politicians belong to another generation. They are out of touch and already one of them is realizing that her older colleagues are hanging on to an outdated attitude.

The Liberal government has no right to act as it is acting, according to Alain Dubuc, who often agrees with the positions of the Liberal government.

Earlier, we were told that we, the members from Quebec, were to blame. But even Daniel Johnson said that the provincial areas of jurisdiction have to be respected.

Whether you read the red book or the blue book, it is six of one and half a dozen of the other. The red book is entitled *Preparing Canada for the 21st Century*. The blue book is Charest’s Plan for Canada in the 21st century. What the Conservatives and the Liberals are proposing is the same thing. They agree that provincial areas of jurisdiction must be respected. What we are asking for is real respect for provincial areas of jurisdiction, which is why we have moved this motion today. This motion asks that the provincial areas of jurisdiction be respected. It is not a minor motion concerning the distinct society that will be voted on in the House of Commons and forgotten about when the time comes to match actions to words.

Let me conclude by saying that I hope the Liberal government will listen to what Quebec wants in this area.

● (1320)

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Quebec was saying that this government has some difficulty putting its words into action. We would have expected, in the spirit of the love demonstration, in the spirit of the resolution approving Quebec as a distinct society, that the government would recognize Quebec as such and would allow it to exercise some of its powers to live up to and improve on its distinct characteristics. But we see these are words without any meaning.

I would like to quote someone. This is a little like a riddle. I would like you to guess who said these words. I will help you at the end. This is a text that goes back a while, to 1957, under Liberal Prime Minister Louis Saint-Laurent, who wanted to establish a federal fund for universities, a fund similar to the millennium fund.

The person I am quoting said “Unconscious, but nonetheless specious, paternalism. How can the central government be so hypocritical? We are entitled to suspect that the federal government’s gifts are made in bad faith. This is insulting for the provinces. This is harmful to the principles of representative democracy”.

Later on, another individual responded to him, and that ended this special edition of a Quebec magazine called *Cité libre*. The

person who was talking at the end was Pierre Laporte, a former Liberal minister. He said “The majority of supporters of federal assistance to universities say that autonomists are latecomers. Not only is the autonomists’ argument defensible, but it will have to prevail if we want French Canada to be well prepared for the tasks of the future”.

Who said the first part about federalism, paternalism and all the rest? It was the great mentor, the person who inspired many policies of this government. Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

Mr. René Laurin: So, this must be true.

Mr. Pierre Brien: Exactly. I hope this will be food for thought for the Liberals. They accuse us, the separatists, of being the only people to defend a position such as the one we are defending today. Pierre Elliott Trudeau, if he were here, should agree with us. We would be able to count on his support. Let us hope that his pupil, his spiritual son, will think likewise.

I would like my colleague to tell me what she thinks about the words of that distinguished politician who inspires the Liberals, Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon: Madam Speaker, I thought he was asking me to guess. My answer would have been Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

Again, we are wondering why the Liberals keep encroaching on provincial jurisdictions. We know, actually, but we can always ask the question. The President of the Treasury Board stated last year that once Quebec was forced to cut, the federal government would be in a position to show they can safeguard social programs.

This is bad faith. I would not like to associate with a partner having so little credibility. They are trying to demonstrate that only Canada can save Quebec, and that is part of the plan B strategy. The Prime Minister should perhaps call Mr. Trudeau to get the benefit of his influence.

Ordinary people are the ones who will suffer because of this. Every time the federal and provincial governments discuss standards, the people, particularly students in this case, end up paying the cost. What we need is a real strategy to reduce student debt loads. The Fédération des étudiants du Québec and the Fédération des collèges du Québec are asking for a new strategy, and they want the money returned to the provinces.

The dropout rate in Quebec is a problem. Universities and colleges are underfunded. Quebec students have already begun to ask for a freeze on tuition fees. This cannot be done without restoring transfers to the provinces for education. Otherwise, how are we going to maintain the quality of education we in Quebec have achieved?

This is an insult. Mr. Trudeau should be consulted about the millennium scholarships. Would he change his mind? I doubt it. The Liberal and Conservative governments are all the same. They

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all favour a centralizing federalism that is insensitive to the provinces' needs.

• (1325)

[*English*]

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would first like to thank the member for Lac—Saint—Jean for a bright and interesting intervention. If I may say so, he has a promising career ahead of him. I will be sharing time with the member for Waterloo—Wellington.

Let me enter into the substance of the debate. The Prime Minister has stated, and it is the reality of our times, that the next century is the knowledge century. Without knowledge, we are left behind in the competition of historical forces, not simply the economic forces and the social forces, and education is the key to that. The key to this element in the federal budget strategy was the recognition of a national emergency, that we have fallen behind other countries and other post-industrial societies in the educational battle.

This has no specific relationship to Quebec, but the provinces have not fulfilled a constitutional mandate in education. They have invested federal moneys in many cases that were intended for education, in highways or other projects that were no doubt interesting, but they did not direct it to the main element of the time, that is to say education.

Facing this situation of national emergency the Prime Minister, with proper constitutional advice, decided on the series of measures members have seen in the last federal budgets; the Foundation for Innovation which is dedicated to creating new infrastructures for medicine, science, technology, engineering; the centres for network excellence, the moneys again for advanced research in science, medicine, technology; the greatly ameliorated programs for student assistance, student loans and aids to their parents.

Now, you would say if we were addressing this to all the provinces, where is our constitutional base. If I may say so, one of the elements of sadness that I have with the constitutional debate as it has developed to date is that it began so promisingly and has dissipated into rather sterile and mundane arguments over constitutional divisions of power.

I can remember the early days of the “quiet revolution”. I can remember my students from the University of Toronto Law Faculty saying to me, as they came to give evidence before the Bilingual and Biculturalism Royal Commission, why do we not have a revolution ourselves? What a pity there is not a “quiet revolution” in English Canada because the thinking is not enlightened, the thinking is not exciting and there are no new feisty ideas.

I hearken back to the days of Paul Gérin Lajoie, Gérard Bergeron, my dear friend Jacques-Yvan Morin, Jacques Brassard, Claude Morin and Gérald Beaudoin, who is in the other chamber here. The “quiet revolution” had a lot of interesting ideas. I do not see much advance in federal thinking in either English speaking Canada or French speaking Canada. This is one of the “what might have beens” of the “quiet revolution”, the lack of contribution to a general process of constitutional modernization.

I took part in the B.C. unity panel. The Prime Minister was asked to delegate a member. He asked me to sit on this. The message we conveyed to the members of this panel was that in this period, act with generosity, do not seek quid pro quos, recognize the uniqueness of Quebec, recognize it generously without demanding return, and that was done. It is a dramatic reversal of the 70%:30% vote against the Charlottetown accord in the referendum in British Columbia. It is a unilateral act of good will.

One might ask on the other side could you not offer something in relation to federalism.

• (1330)

The reality of federalism is that the studies in Canada as a whole have been sterile studies rooted in the a priori truths of British scholars who never themselves lived under a federal state. Their new prime minister, Mr. Blair, has taken them kicking and struggling into a new century by recognizing that perhaps Scotland and Wales are unique societies and that they should do something about it.

The British have never lived under federalism. They exported it to their dominions and gave us essentially a very rigid sterile system of federalism in which the debate was about division of powers in the abstract without focusing on the fundamental issues which the European Union is now facing.

There are social problems and the problem of community decision making. If we try to solve the problems and agree on the solutions, the issue of who has the power will fall logically in place. That is key to the concept of subsidiarity that the European Union is concerned with. It is already clear in Canada that many of our problems were viewed by the privy council and others in the old days in watertight compartments, either federal or provincial, which do not yield themselves to intelligent, useful, long range solutions if one government acts alone.

Co-partnership, cogérance and co-management are the order of the day. All the new federal systems, the non-Anglo Saxon federal system, realize that. I regret that in some ways this debate remains an abstract exercise in a priori concepts instead of facing up to the modern issue of what to do about solving the problem.

If there is an approach to power sharing in this area, come and join us. The facts are that no province has moved substantially to

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modernize its educational system to face the demands of post-industrial society. That is the real tragedy.

Who can object to money being spent on students? Why cannot any government take the initiative? Why cannot other governments join in and say “we will join with you; we will share with you”? That was the real challenge.

I noticed my colleagues, the lady members of the House, are honouring the people involved in the persons case with a monument on the Hill. Not to denigrate the ladies, but I would say the real hero of the persons case was Lord Sankey, an unknown British Liberal lawyer in the House of Commons who was suddenly promoted to lord chancellor. The Labour government did not have any Labour lawyers so it put him there. Lord Sankey discovered the elemental truth that it is obvious that women are persons. He gave the ruling.

Later he announced the doctrine that the constitution is a living tree. It is not rooted in the concepts of 1867. The period at the end of the century we are approaching requires a new attitude to constitutional powers, a new emphasis on power sharing.

In the last few days, in his response to the B.C. unity panel on the fisheries issue, the B.C. premier who was widely viewed as intransigent on fisheries matters indicated areas of co-operation with the federal government. If we are to beat the Americans on the Pacific salmon treaty the federal and provincial governments have to work together with no issue of division of power.

On the immigration issue, Quebec and Ottawa have worked together. René Lévesque signed the Cullen-Couture agreement with Prime Minister Trudeau. Quebec and Ottawa share power on immigration.

With respect to education the question is come and join us in this new adventure. Education is the key element in constructing the new society for the new century. That is the challenge in my view that this debate has not fully responded to.

On that particular attitude I will end my formal comments.

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I always enjoy listening to my learned colleague. My question will not be negative but will ask for his background to a very important question. I believe it is important to the provinces and to the House.

The provinces have very jealously guarded section 93 of the British North America Act concerning education since its inception. We are into a new era, a new world in which we will have to see a greater amount of co-operation at the provincial level. We are being motivated by a new global educational system, one of universality.

• (1335)

Would my learned friend not agree that we should do everything we can from this level, albeit the provinces want to hang on to their traditions, cultures and so on in that given area? I agree with that, but we should have more universality and a more national scope in our education curriculum and planning than we have now.

Mr. Ted McWhinney: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his thoughtful question. I am glad he cited section 93 which, interpreted literally, would have made Quebec a prisoner of a religious school division system. Quebec came to us—and it was arguable on constitutional grounds—and said that it wanted to switch to a language system of school organization.

The better, the modern and the progressive constitutional view, but not the most accepted view, was that we could not do it. It was in the spirit of Lord Sankey that the notion of the evolutionary interpretation of constitutions was applied. As I recollect, the House virtually unanimously accorded that change. We did it under the simplest form of constitutional amendment, a federal-Quebec resolution.

In that area I think we have responded to the notion of the evolution of a constitution. The member is right that the imperatives are now world standards in medicine, engineering, science and languages. The notion that one can be bilingual and that is sufficient is dead. The student of tomorrow will have to be trilingual and quadrilingual. Every Canadian student will need an Asian language in addition to English, French and other languages.

Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC): Madam Speaker, I always enjoy listening to the erudite and lucid remarks of the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra. Coming from Nova Scotia, the cradle of higher education in Canada, education is very important to me and to my constituents.

I would like to ask the hon. member about his feelings relative to national testing. It is an issue, especially with each province investing differently in education. The investment in education in given communities is largely based on the municipal tax base. Thus a poor municipality, like the one I grew up in, for instance, has significantly less money in its education system than one in a wealthier area. The quality of opportunities for young people are not equal.

I would appreciate the member's feedback on that.

Mr. Ted McWhinney: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for that thoughtful question. Let me personally excuse myself. When I criticized the provinces I should have exempted the poorer provinces of the Atlantic region. They have invested in education. They have set an example for wealthy provinces like British Columbia, Ontario and others that have shortchanged the educational system.

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Prime Minister Trudeau once remarked when he got an honorary degree from a Nova Scotia university: "It is amazing that I became a prime minister without being an alumnus of Dalhousie University". The maritimes are poor provinces but they exported their wealth, their educated people, to other provinces.

The member has identified a key problem. It is out of date and wrong in our federal system to put education essentially in the hands of people who are the creatures of the provinces, the municipalities. A modern federal system recognizes three levels of government: federal, provincial and municipal. Under the German system the three levels of government all share the tax revenues, the tax sharing agreements.

The municipalities are underfunded. I have already suggested to the minister of immigration that we make grants for English as a second language training directly to the municipalities because the burden is impossible.

I think the member identified one of the key problems in education.

Mr. Lynn Myers (Waterloo—Wellington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in speaking to the motion I note there is a sad honesty about it. It exposes the shortsightedness in the provincialism that the Bloc Quebecois brings to all issues of public policy. It proposes to "censure any action by the federal government in the area of education".

• (1340)

However, the Bloc is trying to run away and hide from a world where all levels of government have a duty to be concerned about the education of our youth. The reason is obvious. Canada is part of a fast changing, competitive and interdependent world economy that is increasingly knowledge based.

This is not only because of the new high skilled jobs in high tech industries. There has also been a steady rise in skill requirements in all sectors of the economy and in all types of jobs.

The facts speak for themselves. Since 1981 jobs for Canadians with a high school education or less dropped by two million, but more than five million jobs were created for those with higher qualifications.

Education and knowledge are the keys to personal opportunity, security and growth. This has become a fact of modern life. I know this firsthand as a former educator and secondary school teacher with the Waterloo County Board of Education.

It is also a fact of modern life that not all Canadians are in a position to access the knowledge and skills they need throughout their lifetime to find and keep good jobs in a changing labour market.

Barriers, most often financial, reduce access to post-secondary education for many. While the federal government cannot ensure

that every Canadian will succeed, it can enhance the quality of opportunity.

That is what our government has done in the 1998 budget. It has introduced the Canadian opportunities strategy which builds on actions in the 1996 and 1997 budgets and introduces historic new measures. This strategy addresses a core reality of the 21st century life: to get a job, to keep a job, to move on to a better job. There is only one resource that will equip Canadians to succeed, and that is to develop the best skills they can.

Clearly the Bloc would rather see Quebec students, parents and educational institutions do with less rather than be part of the national strategy. By taking this stance the Bloc demonstrates clearly and brutally that it puts its own parochial politics ahead of the future of young Quebecers and all other Canadians.

Our government will not retreat from the international challenge of our young Canadians and what they face. That is why we have launched the Canadian opportunities strategy. This includes the Canadian millennium scholarship foundation, the largest single investment ever made by a federal government to access and support post-secondary education. The government will fund the foundation with an initial 10 year endowment of \$2.5 billion. This investment will provide over 100,000 scholarships to low and medium income students each and every year over the next decade.

The scholarships will average \$3,000 per year. They will be awarded to Canadians of all ages for part time as well as full time students. Students at all public institutions, not simply universities but colleges, CEGEPs and vocational and technical institutes, will be eligible to apply.

The foundation will be a private body operating at arm's length from the government. It has been designed to be sensitive to provincial jurisdiction and differences. Once established, the directors will consult closely with provincial governments in the post-secondary education community. Their goal will be to award scholarships in a manner that avoids duplication in any province, to build on existing provincial needs assessment processes and to complement existing provincial programs. The foundation will have the authority, subject to mutually agreed criteria, to contract with provincial authorities for the selection of scholarship recipients.

The millennium scholarship has drawn the most obvious attack in today's motion, but let me remind the House of the other components of the opportunities strategies that I am confident are being supported by the majority of Canadians including Quebecers.

For example, the opportunities strategy recognizes that the cost of study can be particularly acute for people who have a family. To help them, Canada's study grants of up to \$3,000 per year will be made available to over 25,000 students in financial need who have children.

The second thrust of the Canadian opportunities strategy takes bottom line action to help address student debt. The need is

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pressing. In just eight years the average debt load after a four year program has almost doubled to \$25,000.

The budget announces that for the first time ever all students will be given tax relief on interest payments on their student loans. This will be provided through a 17% tax credit. For a student graduating with a \$25,000 debt this will mean more than \$500 less in taxes in the first year alone. Over a 10 year paydown tax relief could be as high as \$3,200.

For individuals who still face difficult circumstances the government will extend up to five years the period in which it will pay all or part of the interest costs of student loans. This will benefit up to 100,000 graduates in financial hardship.

Our third action is responding to the fact that in today's information age, ability to continue earning depends on ability for new learning.

• (1345)

The educational credit is a major form of tax assistance to students. So far it has been available only to full time students. Now part time students will have access to the credit as well. This will assist 400,000 students.

The 1996 budget enabled full time students who are parents to claim the child care expense deduction against all types of income. Part time students will now become eligible to do this, which will benefit as many as 50,000 students.

What about working Canadians who want to upgrade their skills through full time study but do not have reasonable access to the financial resources this requires?

The Canadian opportunities strategy meets this challenge as well. Effective next January, Canadians will be able to make tax free withdrawals from their RRSPs to support full time education and training. This can be repaid over 10 years.

The Canadian opportunities strategy is not just concerned with today's immediate needs. It also looks ahead to the students of tomorrow, assisting parents to prepare and plan for their children's future education.

We will provide a Canada education savings grant to supplement new contributions made to RESPs. For every dollar contributed, up to an amount of \$2,000 a year, the government will provide a grant equal to 20% of the total which will be paid directly into the child's plan.

Last year's budget created the Canada foundation for innovation to provide facilities at our hospitals, universities and colleges which will support world class research, underscoring our strong commitment to research and development and the culture which that cultivates. That is very important for Canada and for the jobs it creates for Canadians.

This year we are providing new support for researchers themselves so that the best and brightest can fulfil that promise.

Effective immediately the budgets of the three research granting councils, the Natural Science and Engineering Research Council, the Medical Research Council and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, will be restored to their 1994-95 levels. By the end of the year 2001 they will have received \$400 million in additional resources, bringing their budgets up to their highest level ever.

A further element of the strategy reaches beyond the lecture hall and the lab to address another problem confronting young people, the dilemma of no experience, no job; no job, no experience.

We are introducing two measures to support the private sector and others in the challenge of hiring and training youth. First, over the next two years employment insurance premiums paid by employers will be eliminated for new jobs they create for Canadians between the ages of 18 and 24. Second, the 1998 budget doubles the resources devoted to the youth service Canada program to assist those particularly between the ages of 20 and 24.

Computer skills have now joined reading, writing and arithmetic as one of the basics of learning. Having access to a computer puts the world literally at your fingertips.

To bring that goal ever closer for Canadians and communities the government is boosting the resources available to both SchoolNet and the community access program.

In addition, the Canadian opportunities strategy is based on a very straightforward proposition that people, regardless of their income level, who are serious about getting an education should have that opportunity.

Of course there will always be a political issue here. There always is. Education is a matter of provincial jurisdiction. We understand that. The budget makes clear that we respect that profoundly. As the Minister of Finance said in his budget, we are not talking here about the content of what is being taught. What we are talking about is equal access to opportunity.

I would like to finish my remarks by looking back 35 years when two Canadian writers, an anglophone and a Quebecois, published a series of letters addressing issues of Quebec and Canada. One of the issues was education. Gwethalyn Graham wrote to Solange Chaput Rolland: "If French Canada is going to continue to insist that matters of education are exclusively the business of the provinces, then it will indeed be arguing that the rules are more important than the game".

Our government knows that the rules are important. We are confident that our measures do not violate these rules and that they do not infringe on or jeopardize provincial responsibility and authority. However, we also recognize that helping young Canadians to master and win the knowledge game is even more

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important. That is what the Canadian opportunities strategy is designed to do. To censure such an initiative is to censure our government for putting people's future ahead of the Bloc's political grandstanding.

• (1350)

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to make a couple of comments in response to the remarks by the last two speakers from the Liberal Party. One of them spoke of sharing powers, and the other had essentially the same opinions, but expressed them differently.

I would like to know how a power can be shared effectively. Powers and jurisdictions can be shared. If there are 10 jurisdictions, one level of government can look after five of them and another level can look after the other five. You could call that sharing jurisdictions.

However, what this government is trying to do is to share a single jurisdiction. It is as if two cooks were preparing the same soup. One of the cooks adds salt and the other adds a little more to the soup to ensure a salty taste, and get the credit for it. The result is a very salty and unpleasant soup. That is the problem with jurisdictions.

We tell the federal government that we have no objections to its keeping some jurisdictions, like national defence, for itself. But education is ours. We know this field best. Get out of it. The federal government insists on having its own cook add salt to the soup. If need be, it will remove some of the ingredients Quebec uses and use some of its own instead.

That is why we were after the truth. I asked the question of a Liberal member after the budget. I told her that the millennium fund did not suit Quebecers and the students in Quebec, because we already had our own system. Her response was that it was fine, there would be an extra scholarship for her.

What is important, as far as the Liberals are concerned, as I could see from the remarks of the Liberal member, is the failure to see whether the need was consistent for all students. That was not the case. What counted was to ensure all students would enjoy the same measure so that the federal government would be visible. It is more important to meet the individual needs of each of the provinces than to use the same remedy for all students to ensure the federal government gets the credit for adding the last of the spices to the soup I used as an example.

I would therefore ask the member who spoke just before me to explain this sharing of jurisdictions, as he sees it. Does he share the opinion of the federal member who told me she would have an extra scholarship? Is that really the focus of this government?

[*English*]

Mr. Lynn Myers: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member opposite for the question. This is not about soup or salt and spices but rather it is about access to opportunity for all Canadians, especially our young people.

What we are talking about here is not about what is content in education, which is solely under the jurisdiction of the provincial governments. We understand that, we know that and we respect that. What we are talking about here is access to opportunity for our young people who deserve that very first and important first chance. That is what this government is talking about, that is what we are proceeding on and that is precisely the kind of thing that Canadians from coast to coast want, demand and need. That is what this government is providing.

As an educator I have to tell hon. members that I am very proud of the fact that we can proceed on this basis and provide the kind of solid training and background and ability to our young people and in the process ensure that they get the kind of opportunities that are all important for their future.

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Ref.): Madam Speaker, in light of the hour, I wonder whether it would be more appropriate to recess the House for four and a half minutes so we can complete the speech after question period. Would there be unanimous consent to do that?

Some hon. members: No.

• (1355)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): There is not unanimous consent.

Mr. Werner Schmidt: Madam Speaker, it is very interesting to rise on this motion proposed by the Bloc. I find the motion totally negative. That is perhaps not the best way to approach the education of our young people in Canada.

It would be absolutely appropriate to bring to the focus of this House what is needed in education in Canada. I have difficulty with the millennium scholarship fund in that it will affect only about 6% of the post-secondary students in Canada today. The cuts the Liberal government made earlier will affect every student. There is an unfairness in the whole proposition. Not only do I want to address that part, I want to address a positive direction that ought to be taken.

The biggest criticism I have of the millennium scholarship fund is that it has no substantive direction to education and to the education of our young people in Canada today. Let me put the context together for us. It is pretty clear that we are moving to a

knowledge based economy. Knowledge based industries are going to be the big thing. Canada is rapidly moving from a resource based economy to a knowledge based one. Many factors are influencing that change.

Moving and sharing information has become the new economic engine. Outfit and employment are expanding the fastest in the knowledge intensive service sectors such as education, communication and information. This is where our young people ought to be trained.

The costs of communication and information processing have fallen dramatically. Today's computing costs are one-one ten thousandth of what they cost 20 years ago. This has swelled computer use and has heightened international trade and accelerated globalization. These factors have profound effects on the way people live, work, play and learn.

What this means is, for example, microchips today are doubling their ability to process every 18 months. To succeed in the face of such rapid change means continual vigilance to keep current with the technological status quo.

Competition is going global. We need to recognize that distance is no longer a relevant issue. I was speaking to someone who is doing a major telecommunications expansion and developing a program into China. I asked this gentleman if he is going with a line system into China or with wireless digital communications in terms of telecommunications. He said wireless digital communications.

With the developments of low orbiting satellites it will be possible for literally every nation on this globe to be serviced by wireless digital telecommunications. Where are the young people who have the skills to meet that new world?

If there was thing this scholarship fund should have done it was provide some incentive for our institutions to provide the kind of preparation for graduates to meet that kind of demand.

I draw the House's attention to a recent article, February 21, in the *Financial Post*. It says very clearly that we are experiencing a shortage of skilled people in our knowledge based industries. Many of the courses that our universities and post-secondary institutions are offering are not adequate in order to meet the demands for new graduates.

We had appear before the Standing Committee on Industry immigration people and HRDC people who said very clearly that we are scouring the world to find adequately trained and skilled people who can help us bring our computers to meet the demands for the year 2000 transition when we are going to have to be ready for a whole new system. We do not have them here in Canada. A large group of about 1,800 have just been brought in on the emergency immigration system to do exactly that.

We have a major issue before us. This program should have moved in that direction.

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I see in light of the time that my remarks will carry on after question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1400)

[English]

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.): Madam Speaker, Justice Krever concludes that the treatment of victims in Canada's blood scandal has been unequal and that compensating some needy sufferers and not others cannot be justified. Yet the federal health minister still continues to deny compensation for the estimated 60,000 Canadians who contracted hepatitis C from tainted blood.

More insulting to many of these victims is the likelihood that the federal government will in a truly meanspirited gesture only offer compensation to those who contracted the disease between 1986 and 1990. Apparently the bean counters and lawyers over at justice and health are confident they can limit the government's financial liability by cheating about half the victims who contracted hepatitis C out of compensation.

Reformers call upon this government to immediately offer compensation to all hepatitis C victims and not just those who contracted the virus after 1986. Shame on this health minister for not having done so already because to those seriously ill or dying, justice and compensation delayed is justice and compensation denied.

* * *

HUNGARY

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring to the attention of this House the very special significance of Sunday, March 15 to Hungarians around the world.

In 1848, 150 years ago, Europe was in upheaval. It was the year of revolution. Absolute monarchies were decaying and freedom and liberty were attempting to break free of the chains of tyranny.

On that day in that year, the Hungarian people announced their revolt from the absolutism of the Hapsburg monarchy centred in Vienna. This was a bold act. It led to short lived freedom, to be followed by a generation of repression by the last vestiges of the regime.

The spark lit on March 15, 1848 ultimately led to a workable arrangement between Austria and Hungary lasting 50 years and ignited the flame of liberty in 1989, finally resulting in a free,

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independent and democratic Hungary which this year became one of our newest NATO partners.

Best wishes to Hungarians everywhere on the 150th anniversary of Hungary's national day.

* * *

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL WILLIAM BARKER

Mr. David Pratt (Nepean—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this date 68 years ago one of the pioneers of Canadian aviation and Canada's most decorated war hero, Lieutenant-Colonel William Barker, was killed in a plane crash on the Ottawa River just a few kilometres from here. He was 35 years of age.

In his day Lieutenant-Colonel Barker was a hero's hero. His state funeral was reported to be the largest in the history of Toronto. The cortege was two miles long with 2,000 uniformed men as escorts and 50,000 spectators looking on.

When he ended his military career he held no fewer than nine gallantry awards including the Victoria Cross as well as two foreign decorations. He had 50 great war air victories to his credit. Flying alone in his last air battle, he was seriously wounded three times, fell into unconsciousness twice, but still managed to destroy four enemy aircraft.

Lieutenant-Colonel William Barker is one of Canada's forgotten heroes. He is also one of this country's greatest heroes. It is high time Canadians recognized his extraordinary achievements.

* * *

[Translation]

TAINTED BLOOD VICTIMS

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, recently, a Quebec Superior Court judge ruled that hepatitis C victims had the right to launch a class action suit against the federal government, the Quebec government and the Red Cross. Yesterday, a group in Ontario took similar action before the courts.

This is food for thought for the Minister of Health and his finance colleague. After chopping federal transfers for health and piling up surpluses in the EI fund, this government does not have any legitimate reason not to follow the recommendations in the Krever report and develop a financial compensation plan for those directly or indirectly affected by this tragedy, regardless of when they were infected.

It is time this government stopped hiding behind the provinces and fulfilled its responsibilities to the tainted blood victims, who have been waiting far too long.

• (1405)

[English]

RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan (York North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, founders of responsible government in Canada, Robert Baldwin and Louis Lafontaine, worked to make Canada a country in which both francophones and anglophones could live in harmony.

In 1841 Baldwin was easily elected to represent the communities that make up my riding of York North. Monsieur Lafontaine however was defeated in his Quebec constituency. In a gesture that has since become the stuff of Canadian legend, Baldwin gave up his seat in York North for Lafontaine. The people of York North readily elected Mr. Lafontaine.

Baldwin and Lafontaine were reformers in the true sense of the word. They fought for greater tolerance, co-operation and democracy in our political system. They worked to show what Canadians have in common, not what keeps them apart. Perhaps today's Reformers could take some inspiration from their example.

Long live responsible government. Long live the spirit of tolerance among all Canadians. Long live the true memory of Baldwin and Lafontaine.

* * *

[Translation]

GABRIELLE LÉGER

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to a highly respected Canadian woman. We were saddened to learn that Gabrielle Léger, the wife of the former governor general, His Excellency the Hon. Jules Léger.

Her courage and strength of character earned Mrs. Léger the respect of all Canadians. When the governor general became seriously ill, she stood by his side. Mrs. Léger became the first woman to deliver the Speech from the Throne after the governor general suffered a stroke that left him unable to speak clearly.

Her contributions to Canadian heritage were recognized when the Gabrielle Léger award was instituted by the Heritage Canada Foundation and when Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau announced a scholarship was being created in her honour and that of her husband.

Let us pay tribute to the memory of Mrs. Léger and her many contributions to Canada.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's economic success in the next century will depend largely on a vigorous and accessible research and development infrastructure.

In its 1997 budget, the Canadian government set aside \$800 million to establish the Canada Foundation for Innovation. The government also promised to increase the funds earmarked for granting councils by \$400 million over the next three years.

The Canadian government is pursuing two specific goals. First, it is strengthening partnerships between universities and industry. Second, our government is increasing assistance to graduate students in the form of postdoctoral research scholarships.

The Canadian government will continue to play an active role in the field of research, which it sees as the key to the prosperity of all Canadians in the economy of tomorrow.

* * *

GABRIELLE LÉGER

Hon. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we offer our sincerest condolences to the family and friends of Gabrielle Léger, who died Tuesday evening in Ottawa after a courageous battle with cancer.

[English]

Mr. Speaker, let me remind you that in 1976 Madam Léger read the Speech from the Throne in this House, a most unique event in our history.

In 1978 Heritage Canada created the Gabrielle Léger award in honour of this great lady's contribution to the preservation of our Canadian heritage. The award has since become Canada's premier honour in the heritage field.

This distinguished recipient of the Order of Canada was chancellor of the University of Ottawa from 1979 to 1985.

[Translation]

Mrs. Léger was devoted to charitable organizations here and in the third world. She was especially committed to the foundation named after two brothers, Paul-Émile and Jules Léger, and served as honorary president—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Laval East.

* * *

OTTAWA SUN

Mrs. Maud Debien (Laval East, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Earl McRae's column in yesterday's *Ottawa Sun* was particularly edifying.

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Mr. McRae, through his friend Al, called sovereignists "bastards", "blocked heads" and "conspiring traitors". His friend Al mentioned that if he were a Liberal, he would have charged across the floor and planted a Canadian flag in each and every one of us "where the sun don't shine". All this on page 3 of a Conrad Black newspaper.

• (1410)

There is no doubt about it, Canadian patriots can be proud of themselves. Canadian patriots are great. Canadian patriots love us. And by the way, why are these great columns not translated and published in Conrad Black's French newspapers? I believe Quebecers would like to know in what high esteem they are being held.

This is the result of Plan B. This is the reason why more and more Quebecers want Quebec to become sovereign.

* * *

[English]

MEMBER FOR EDMONTON NORTH

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is the anniversary of a special day for me and Reformers everywhere. On March 13 nine years ago the hon. member for Edmonton North made history as the first modern Reformer elected to this House.

Born on the first of July, she is known by many names: the first lady of Reform, the iron snowbird, and Biker Spice, a tribute to her love for her Honda Goldwing. She is also known as the loving wife of Lew Larson.

The first few years of my friend's political career were lonely. She endured undeserved scorn from politicians terrified of the forces of change she represented. As a tiny caucus of one, she absorbed unbelievable rudeness from a governing party that was soon itself reduced to two seats. A lesser woman would have become dejected or hard hearted but not my friend. She only became more determined and more enthusiastic.

A great big thank you and congratulations to the member for Edmonton North, first in the House for Reform and always first in our hearts.

The Speaker: Happy anniversary, Deb.

* * *

[Translation]

MAURICE RICHARD

Mr. Bob Kilger (Stormont—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we were shocked to hear yesterday that our beloved champion Maurice Richard recently started the fight of his life. Fortunately, he seems to be responding well to treatment, but cancer is an insidious disease, and Maurice must be vigilant.

Oral Questions

We only have this to say to our champion: Maurice, you must get better. For a whole generation of Canadians you are a shining light. Maurice, young people still need the advice you alone can offer. Older Canadians still talk about your great plays in the National Hockey League. A true professional, you are an inspiration to all those who want a challenge in life.

Maurice, we will let you have a rest between periods, but no more. Take good care of yourself and surprise us once again. Make this the finest moment of your career and come back to us stronger than ever, standing tall in the stands or at centre ice in Molson Centre.

* * *

[English]

WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, whatever happened to the national children's agenda? Where are the funds to match the announcement that the Liberal government is committed to helping children and families in need?

I would like to get the answer to this question because in Vancouver a unique and excellent proposal has been developed by the Vancouver school board, the Vancouver Richmond regional health board, the provincial government, the city of Vancouver and community organizations. If supported, it will provide a significant investment for healthy child development in Vancouver.

Windows of opportunity is a powerful reminder that action is urgently needed. The Minister of Human Resources Development has received the proposal and we hope for a prompt and positive response.

I have asked the Vancouver Liberal MPs for their support. I hope they will join me to secure the necessary funds. Windows of opportunity is of national significance and must be funded as a model of a community based approach for the health and social development of children.

* * *

DNA IDENTIFICATION ACT

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-3, the DNA Identification Act was tabled in the House last September.

I believe we must ensure that any piece of legislation that creates a DNA data bank should be balanced to protect the privacy rights of all Canadians. Although this issue is fundamentally important, DNA analysis is not just about the potential threat to the right to privacy. DNA analysis is an opportunity to make our justice system more efficient, effective and fair. Not only does DNA evidence help police solve crimes, it also helps to ensure that innocent people will not be unduly prosecuted.

It is my opinion that Bill C-3 in its present form does not go far enough. The preconditions to collect DNA evidence samples are so strict that they limit the opportunities for police to take full advantage of such an important crime fighting tool. They also extend the period for which innocent people remain cloaked in a veil of suspicion.

• (1415)

I respectfully request the Solicitor General of Canada to re-examine Bill C-3 and amend it to allow police officers to collect DNA samples at the time of arrest.

This would enable our justice system to build a case against those—

The Speaker: Oral questions, the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the auditor general says the government has violated the rules of public sector accounting and he might not even sign off on the Prime Minister's budget without a serious disclaimer.

The Prime Minister hopes that this will be written off as some argument about accounting methods but this is a lot more than that. It is about using unethical tricks to hide billions of dollars in surpluses from taxpayers who should get that surplus in tax relief.

Whose idea was it to hide the surplus from the taxpayers? Was it the Prime Minister's idea or was it the finance minister's idea?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no hiding of anything. If anything, the auditor general is saying that we are too open.

The Canadian people did better than previously. At the end of the year we took \$2.5 billion and put it aside so that there will be 100,000 scholarships a year for 10 years for young Canadians to be ready for the 21st century.

It is so open that everybody knows about the money even before anybody receives any.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the auditor general did not see transparency, he saw trickery in the budget.

The auditor general says he cannot trust the Prime Minister's budget because of accounting tricks that misrepresent the size of the surplus.

Oral Questions

Yesterday the finance minister said he learned these tricks in the private sector. But suppose the management of a public company did not want to pay a dividend to its shareholders so it used accounting tricks to hide the surplus. Today that treasurer would be making licence plates in some penitentiary.

Why is the Prime Minister playing fast and loose with the financial statements of the government?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is the first time that a government is being criticized because it is doing much better than anybody predicted.

Yes indeed we had \$2.5 billion available at the end of the year and we decided that the money would be used to have the greatest millennium project of any country in the world, to invest it in young people for the 21st century.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's memory needs to be jogged. This is not the first time that the auditor general has raised questions about his financial statements. This is the third year in a row that the auditor general has raised those questions.

He said he found serious breaches in accounting rules. There is a pattern to these breaches. Every one of them works against the taxpayers' interest in tax relief.

Why do the Prime Minister's dubious accounting practices always work to the disadvantage of the taxpayers?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last year we had an \$800 million fund for innovation. I say it is a very good thing for the scientists to prepare Canada for the 21st century.

Yes, a year ago we invested \$800 million for innovation to prepare Canada for the 21st century in science and this year we are investing \$2.5 billion in the young people of Canada to have them ready for the 21st century.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, an ordinary maintenance worker named Simone Olofson tried to speak up at a defence committee hearing about problems on her base.

She was threatened by the department's lawyers and they told her to keep her mouth shut, and the minister knows it. These people are bullies.

• (1420)

After denying that there was even a problem yesterday in the House, the minister now claims to have sent a letter of apology. He released it to the press but Simone herself does not even have a copy of this.

This department is always playing catch-up. It is always playing fast and loose with people. My question to the minister is this, and I demand an answer. Why do these people write these letters at all? Why should they—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of National Defence.

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the letter was sent and there has been an apology. In fact, the apology was sent earlier this week, long before the matter was raised by the opposition.

There is also a long history of a complaint by a former employee no longer hired by the community centre that she worked at on the base. She has grievances against different employees and supervisors. It has had a long history.

It was in that light that the letter was sent, but the letter should not have been sent. It has been withdrawn and an apology has been issued. The legal adviser involved is also being counselled on the matter.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is just unbelievable that this minister would stand in his place yesterday and say that the opposition did not even have its facts straight and then about 27 minutes later was out in the scrum saying everything has been taken care of.

It is a responsibility of this minister to make sure that this kind of nonsense is not happening in his department. Simone Olofson deserves an answer to this today.

Why in the world is this minister allowing his officials to personally harass this woman?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is a good example where again they have it wrong. There is no harassment. Poor judgment was exercised in this case. The letter has been withdrawn and an apology issued.

Members of the Canadian forces and their families should feel free to appear before the SCNDVA committee and to testify before it.

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[Translation]

OPTION CANADA

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on November 5, 1997, the Minister of Canadian Heritage received a memo saying that Option Canada had not followed the procedures set out for that kind of program.

Yet, that very same day, the minister told the committee: "I checked to see if these funds were spent in accordance with Treasury Board regulations. It would appear that they were".

How can the minister justify telling the heritage committee the very opposite of what was written in the memo she received the same day?

Oral Questions

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have nothing further to add to what I said yesterday. Treasury Board only looked at how the money was handed out. The follow-up was not good, which I stated several months ago. There is nothing to add. We have made the necessary changes so that it does not happen again.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how can the Minister of Canadian Heritage justify the fact that, on November 5, 1997, she told the heritage committee that everything was fine, that everything had been done properly, when a report dated March 31, six months earlier, said that only two of the 22 conditions had been met? How can she justify that?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I told the committee is that what was asked of Treasury Board before the money was handed out was done properly. What was not done is the follow-up with the documents, and I have already sent a letter on this subject to the parties concerned.

I am troubled by the fact that, yesterday, the member for Rimouski—Mitis made false statements in this House concerning the way cheques were handed out. She should check the facts and stop telling lies.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

[*English*]

The Speaker: Colleagues, as you know, that type of word is not permitted in the House of Commons. I would like the hon. minister to please withdraw that word.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Sheila Copps: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the word "lie".

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Heritage told the leader of the Bloc Québécois that she had just written Option Canada president Claude Dauphin asking how he had used the \$4.8 million her department had put into Option Canada.

• (1425)

How can the minister justify such a long delay before writing Mr. Dauphin, when she has known for a year, from the Bloc Québécois' questions and her own department's reports, that something was very fishy at Option Canada?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I acted as soon as I had the internal audit report.

I would like to also ask something in good faith of the hon. member for Rimouski—Mitis. Yesterday she made statements she knows to be incorrect. I trust that, in this matter, she will respect the truth and will take this opportunity to clarify her past statements.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in 1995, with each of the three funding instalments to Option Canada, the former Minister of Heritage called for a report on their use. We are still waiting.

Ethically speaking, is the Prime Minister not concerned by the fact that an influential advisor to the Minister of Finance, with responsibility for Quebec matters, is incapable of explaining, two and a half years after the fact, what he did with Option Canada's \$4.8 million?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in this House, the hon. member for Rimouski—Mitis made statements she knows today to be incorrect. Will she take the time today to clarify yesterday's statements? If she really wants to address this, she must at least tell the truth.

* * *

[*English*]

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Prime Minister. This government has shoved 730,000 Canadians off unemployment insurance and on to welfare, and 1.4 million Canadians remain unemployed. In my province of Nova Scotia alone 51,000 people cannot find work. Yet in Halifax this very day high tech firms offer \$1,000 finders fees to get the employees they need because of a skills shortage of 20,000 software programmers.

How does the Prime Minister justify training and employment policies that create these disastrous results?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the change in the economy has created a million new jobs in the last four years. Because the economy is growing fast, at this moment there are some shortages in skilled labour. That is why we have programs to help people get ready for the economy of tomorrow.

We are very sorry there are people who are unemployed but we are investing money to make sure they can be trained in areas where they can find jobs. I am glad that growth in Canada is creating a situation in which young people who train themselves properly will find proper jobs.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what kind of a hoax is this? Who is the Prime Minister kidding? This government has slashed \$1 billion from federal training funds. That is a 50% reduction. Seven hundred million dollars was cut from EI training alone.

I challenge the Prime Minister to come to my province of Nova Scotia in the next week. Let me show him firsthand the disastrous effects of these policies.

Does he have the guts to face unemployed Nova Scotians? Can he explain to them why these 51,000 unemployed cannot get the training they need to fill these high tech jobs?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope the hon. member is aware that with the new employment insurance scheme there is money available for the unemployed to get the training they need. This did not exist before we passed the new legislation.

* * *

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. The minister should know that when my grandfather came to this country in the 1900s he could speak neither English nor French. He spoke Ukrainian. But he contributed to this country, as did his family and his family's family.

In her consultations on the report of the advisory committee, the minister has faced mounting pressure on the report's recommendation that all prospective immigrants speak either French or English. My question is simple. Is her answer yes or no to the recommendation?

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I said publicly that I have very serious concerns about this kind of recommendation where only one criterion can disqualify somebody from coming to this country. It is not only the language requirement but even age or education. I find that very excessive. It is clear that we will find a more balanced approach.

• (1430)

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister's answer. Perhaps she would like to share with the House today exactly what that balanced approach means. Does that balanced approach mean that the language recommendation will not be accepted by this minister?

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member has to realize that we just finished a public consultation yesterday. Not only people who came to the public consultation but many Canadians wrote to us about their concerns.

I ask the member to give me some time before the government will take an official position, not only on that but on the 172 recommendations included in the report.

Oral Questions

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Lakeland, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence. In his response to the question from the member for Edmonton North, the minister unbelievably said that Ms Olofson was not harassed by his department.

My question for the minister is if this was the case, then why has his department apologized?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the facts are simple. There was an error in judgment. A letter was sent that should not have been sent. The letter has since been withdrawn and an apology has been issued.

Furthermore, we have once again sent a message to all of our employees, all of the members of the forces and their families, encouraging them to appear before the Standing Committee on Defence and Veterans' Affairs to talk about the issues that affect their social and economic needs. It is a process that this government solidly supports.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Lakeland, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the minister is sending this letter to people who are going to appear before the defence committee. He has done that before.

Ms. Olofson, who testified before the committee, then received a threatening letter from the judge advocate general. This type of intimidation seems to be rampant in the minister's department.

I ask the minister how many other people have received similar types of letters from his department?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of any other letter that has been sent in this connection.

In this case there was a long history. There was an error in judgment that was exercised. I might say that some 1,700 people have appeared before the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans' Affairs to talk about this issue. They have done so without feeling any threats whatsoever, and they have no reason to fear any threat whatsoever.

* * *

[Translation]

QUEBEC'S TRADITIONAL DEMANDS

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Yesterday, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs said that neither the Prime Minister nor he believed in the notion of Quebec's traditional demands.

Oral Questions

Will the Prime Minister confirm that neither he nor his government recognize the existence of Quebec's traditional demands?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our throne speech included a series of commitments, and we have met many of them. Manpower training has been transferred to the provinces. The federal government has withdrawn from mining, forestry and tourism. We have given the provinces control over subsidized housing. We even have a resolution on spending powers.

Many issues have been resolved. We do not take the whole list. We solve one problem at a time. It is the best way to maintain harmony in our federation.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is really not clear. The Prime Minister seems to think there is a list, but his minister says that is not the case. Perhaps they should consult each other.

After denying the existence of the Quebec culture, and now having his minister deny the existence of Quebec's traditional demands, will the Prime Minister confirm that, whoever the Quebec premier is, whether this person is a federalist or a sovereigntist, and regardless of the promises made by him in the last referendum, his only vision of federalism is his own and that he will not change it one bit?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have shown a flexibility that had not been seen in a long time. I just listed the initiatives we took in the cultural field. The hon. member himself has just raised the issue.

I was in Montreal Sunday evening and people were asking the federal government to take action. I told a joke in front of the Quebec premier who then said "Yes, if you have money for the Montreal symphony orchestra, we would be very happy to see that money transferred to Montreal".

* * *

• (1435)

[English]

HOCKEY

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

U.S. hockey teams are getting hundreds of millions of government dollars to subsidize their arenas. That puts Canadian NHL teams at a tremendous disadvantage. Let me remind members that one of the main objectives of the free trade agreement was to ensure fair competition between Canada and the United States.

Will the Prime Minister take specific steps to make sure our Canadian teams are not being put in the penalty box in the NHL?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the interest of the hon. member. I only hope that he can prevail upon his colleagues in the Reform Party who were the first to complain when we established a subcommittee on sport to make sure there is a future for all sport in Canada and, in particular, the winter national sport of the NHL.

If he participates in the subcommittee, he will get good results.

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it seems that the minister has not noticed that what we are asking for are reduced subsidies instead of more subsidies. This is a very serious situation.

First we lost the Quebec Nordiques. Then we lost the Winnipeg Jets. Now we are in danger of losing the Edmonton Oilers. Thousands of jobs are dependent upon our hockey teams. This is more than about economics. It is about our national culture.

Will the Prime Minister take steps under the free trade agreement to make sure Canadian teams are not being cross-checked with unfair subsidies?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was at a Calgary Flames game about three weeks ago and I had a chance to discuss with some of the key players in Alberta their concerns about ensuring that we have vibrant and healthy hockey in Canada, in all parts of the country. The fact is that is exactly the issue for which the subcommittee on sport was established and the chair, Dennis Mills, is working on it.

If the member really wants a solution he should, along with other participants, go to the subcommittee to put forward his points of view. We will certainly consider them and I hope we will be able to implement a great number of them.

The Speaker: I would remind hon. members not to refer to each other by name.

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[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE REFORM

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, whatever we ask him, the Minister of Human Resources Development gives us the pat answers of a technocrat.

Is the minister unaware of the tragedy wrought by his EI reform, which is reducing thousands of families to poverty and forcing them onto welfare just to survive?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last year, the Bloc Quebecois

Oral Questions

criticized me for not understanding the EI reform and went on about it in the House. Now I am being blamed for understanding it too well and sounding like a technocrat.

What I can say is that we are keeping a close eye on the impacts of our EI reform. We feel that Canadians deserve a service adapted to the contemporary labour market and we are going to continue to serve Canadians well with the reform we introduced last year.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as we approach the so-called spring gap, which the reform purposely created, is the minister aware that his reform means that thousands of workers, particularly in the regions, will have failed to accumulate enough weeks of work and will have to turn to welfare for lack of resources while, each week, he pockets a surplus of \$130 million?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like once again to draw the opposition's attention to the fact that there have not been this few people on welfare in Quebec for five years. Never have the numbers been so low. This means something is going right in our economy.

In addition, we are already seeing that people find the additional weeks to maintain the level of benefits to which they are entitled. The preliminary report is clear: people are beginning to find additional weeks, the reform is on the right track and it is working.

As for the more difficult problems, we are going to continue working together to find the right solutions.

* * *

● (1440)

[English]

CFB CALGARY

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, when the government closed CFB Calgary, it was clear they were punishing Calgarians for not electing Liberals.

Now Calgary wants to use some of the CFB land to build a veterans' hospital, some low income housing and a college but the government has dispatched unelected Senator Dan Hays, president of the Liberal Party, to tell Calgary's elected officials they are going to have to pay through the nose to buy the land they already own.

Why is the government forcing Alberta taxpayers to pay millions for land they already own?

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since we closed the military base in Calgary there has been a committee of all levels of government with equal sharing looking at how to develop the land.

I can assure this House that the development is going on and Calgarians will benefit from this development.

I hope the hon. member looks at the participation of the local committee where they are seriously looking at how the Calgarians will benefit and creating new opportunities for Canadians.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, these people have been talking to the local officials and they are outraged with the way this government is treating Calgary to a double standard.

When it comes to the Downsview air force base in the Minister of National Defence's riding they get a special deal for the land. When it comes to the Collège militaire in Quebec, they get a special deal. But when it comes to CFB Calgary, the elected officials are saying that they are being penalized by this government, which will not let the Canadian lands corporation negotiate.

Why do you have an unelected senator telling Calgary elected officials that they are going to have to pay through the nose for this land they own?

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the senator in question is a member of the local committee that is working with the municipal and provincial authorities.

I will tell you what we have been doing at the new Calgary base: a new school on the site; an interim housing rental program, a promise to maintain a military legacy, a first-class plan working on proposals, environment programs, major job creation and tax breaks—

Some hon. members: More, more.

* * *

[Translation]

MULTILATERAL AGREEMENT ON INVESTMENT

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade.

Yesterday, European parliamentarians stressed the need to be represented in the negotiations on the Multilateral Agreement on Investment and said that the agreement in its present form should not be signed at any cost.

Does the minister understand that the request by the European parliamentarians is the same request the Bloc Québécois has been making for a number of weeks now? Is he prepared to submit the proposed agreement to the parliamentary committee before it is signed?

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government's position on the Multilateral Agreement on Investment with the OECD is very clear.

We are prepared to underwrite firms only when the Canadian objective is very clear. We have stated publicly in the House the

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importance of culture, social services, aboriginal issues and ethnic groups. On the matter of the standstill, we are willing—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

* * *

[*English*]

FRANCOPHONIE GAMES

Ms. Jean Augustine (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, according to reports on the francophonie games to be held in Ottawa-Hull in 2001, the offer of travel costs is causing some confusion and is the topic of conversation in my riding.

Would the government House leader clarify the offer to pay athletes' travel costs? Does this offer include costs for all athletes coming to Canada for these games?

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in practice this is not a precedent, as was alleged. The information that was given is totally wrong. One-tenth of the athletes will be subsidized, all from developing countries, not 2000 of them but merely 200. This is the same as was done for other francophonie games and it is also very similar to what is done for other major sporting events.

Finally, the total cost is less than one-half of what was alleged by both the media and an hon. member across.

* * *

• (1445)

HOCKEY

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I think the government misunderstood the question from the member for Peace River.

U.S. hockey teams, as all members know, are very heavily subsidized. We believe that is contrary certainly to the spirit and perhaps the letter of NAFTA and the WTO.

I would ask the Minister for International Trade what steps can be taken, either under NAFTA or the WTO, to stop this high level of subsidization which hurts the Canadian franchises.

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Canadian Heritage was saying that through the leadership of our caucus members, particularly the member of Parliament for Broadview—Greenwood, we have established a subcommittee to look into the entire game of hockey.

We have also had a number of discussions with a number of hockey teams in Canada with respect to the kinds of subsidies provided both from the municipal and federal perspective in the United States. That is important and is something the subcommittee will address.

No one is dismissing the issue. It will certainly be looked at and should be.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the minister has identified giving subsidies. We are talking about taking them away.

If something can be done at the business level to get more fair competition in the NHL, as all members know this would enormously benefit Canadian NHL franchises, in particular the Edmonton Oilers at this time.

I ask the minister not what will be done or studied, but what steps if any have been taken under NAFTA or the WTO to address this subsidy.

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the whole question of subsidies and trying to attract investment in the United States or Canada is much more complex than simply the hockey teams. It is an issue that is of concern to our teams but it also enters the whole world of investment.

When we are competing for investment we are also competing with what municipalities, states and provinces and national governments could do. It is not as clear cut as the member says because quite often he puts his skate guards on while he is skating.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Rick Laliberte (Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the environment minister.

The minister has tabled a new Canadian Environmental Protection Act, Bill C-32. Even though there are problems enforcing the current act, does Environment Canada have sufficient resources to fulfil legal responsibilities and enforce regulations contained in the current CEPA?

Hon. Christine Stewart (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was a great honour today to be able to table legislation to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. The act is meant to enhance our environment, to improve our air and water quality, and to ensure that we have a good natural environment.

Important principles are embodied in this legislation, one of them being pollution prevention. It is less costly to be engaged in pollution prevention than to have to deal with the issues of enforcement after pollution occurs.

This department has sufficient resources to deal with every element of environmental protection under the current act and the one to come into force.

Mr. Rick Laliberte (Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has time and time again proven that it cannot handle environmental issues.

In January the environment minister signed the Environmental Harmonization Act and three subagreements with the provinces.

Will the minister today support that no single veto from the provinces will reduce federal powers to enforce CEPA regulations?

Hon. Christine Stewart (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under the current Canadian Environmental Protection Act the government has accomplished a great deal to protect the natural environment.

We no longer have dioxins and furans going into water the way we did before. We have removed lead from gasoline. We are dealing with benzene. We have accomplished untold numbers of things.

The government will continue to work through the existing legislation and the new legislation to improve the quality of our environment.

* * *

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister of immigration.

The minister's advisory group did indeed make a recommendation that all future immigrants coming to Canada speak either English or French. That recommendation has come about because of the costs incurred by the provinces in providing language training to immigrant families.

● (1450)

Will the minister agree today to advance the necessary funds to the provinces to provide that language training and eliminate the recommendation that immigrants speak either English or French before coming to Canada?

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a few moments ago I answered that question by another member of the same party. I said that I am concerned about that requirement.

Having said that, it is clear the federal government has settlement services and provides funds for training and other activities.

When we receive newcomers to Canada we must welcome them and help them to integrate. Last year we added \$63 million to the budget to help newcomers to the country. We are taking our responsibility but it is clear that the provinces—

The Speaker: The hon. member for St. John's East.

Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, PC): Mr. Speaker, the minister's legislative advisory group recommended that prospective immigrants meet stricter financial requirements. That would appear to favour immigrants from wealthy countries.

Is the minister not aware that this will lead to the rejection of perfectly viable immigrants simply because they are not rich?

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Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I invite the member to read all the report. It is not a report from government, which is why we are studying it.

The member will see some very good proposals concerning family categories including how to extend the definition of spouse, the sponsorship of kids and how to reduce the length of sponsorship for women and children. We have a very good proposal in front of us which we have to analyse and take a position on.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Colleen Beaumier (Brampton West—Mississauga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago Canada hosted an unprecedented multilateral symposium on human rights with representation from the Chinese government.

Given the critical importance of bringing about transparency and justice to the Chinese political and judicial systems, could the Minister of Foreign Affairs inform the House of the results of this symposium?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last fall the Prime Minister announced with the Chinese president that we would start a new initiative on human rights to have a major dialogue.

As the member said, that took place 10 days ago when Canadian and Chinese senior officials met along with other Asian observers.

I am pleased to tell the House the Chinese foreign minister just announced that China will now sign the United Nations covenant on civil and political rights, which shows that the dividend of constructive engagement can work.

* * *

HOME CARE

Mr. Eric Lowther (Calgary Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, many in the House recognize that the most critical relationship in a healthy society is the parent-child bond. Sadly the government's budget increased discrimination against parents who choose to care for their children at home.

Parents are crying out. When if ever will the government stop saying to stay at home parents that they will be given a tax break if someone else looks after their children but if they do it there is no value in it?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member ought to know, the Income Tax Act contains a number of measures such as the spousal credit which help parents if one of the two parents stays at home.

Oral Questions

At the same time the hon. member will recognize there is a huge number of families in which both parents are working. The government believes it is our responsibility to help those families as well.

* * *

[Translation]

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. René Canuel (Matapédia—Matane, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

In the matter of the Matane seafood plant, everything is in place. The only thing missing is the federal government. Does the minister understand that, to save 200 families which depend on this plant, the federal government has to do its share, and soon?

[English]

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the area of the allocation of resources we have a number of decisions that will shortly be made which will affect the entire lower shore of the St. Lawrence River.

I should point out, however, that management of the shore plants is essentially a provincial responsibility.

* * *

● (1455)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Defence.

With the devastating effects ASD has on the people of Goose Bay, Labrador, is this the example that the defence department plans to send to bases such as Wainwright, Sheffield, Shilo, Borden, Montreal and Gagetown?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the purpose behind alternate service delivery as it relates to Goose Bay is to save the base, to save as many jobs as we possibly can and at the same time reduce the cost of providing the service to the taxpayers and to the users of the base.

* * *

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Jim Jones (Markham, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Recommendation 35 would impose a tuition fee on all those over six years of age who have not in a standardized test reached a level considered to be of a basic knowledge of one of our official languages.

Currently the federal government imposes an entry fee of almost \$950 under the LINC program, which is supposed to cover language training and other adjustment routines for new immigrants.

Will the minister today commit to saying no to this recommendation based on the last two weeks of consultations on this report?

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if one thing is good about that report, it woke up the Tory party to ask questions about immigration.

I never had one so I am very happy to have all these questions today. The member can be assured that we will facilitate the entry of immigrants into this country in the future.

* * *

YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

Mr. Carmen Provenzano (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

Violent group crime by young Canadians appears to be growing. This alarming phenomenon has reared its ugly head in large and small cities and towns throughout Canada.

Will the minister commission a Canada-wide study of group violence by teenagers, and will she reform the Young Offenders Act to establish further deterrents to such crime?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has raised an issue of growing concern to many Canadians.

As I have already said in the House, in the next few weeks I will be tabling the government's response to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights report on the renewal of the youth justice system.

I reassure the hon. member that we will not take a simplistic approach to what is a very complex and difficult problem. We as a government believe that if we are truly to protect society and communities like Sault Ste. Marie, it will only happen if we not only deal firmly with violent crime but act together to prevent crime and to rehabilitate young people who break our laws.

* * *

SENATE OF CANADA

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister keeps accusing Reform of not supporting the Charlottetown accord and Senate election. He seems to have forgotten that the Charlottetown accord gave provincial politicians the right to appoint senators. This is not what Canadians want.

Will the Prime Minister commit today at least to sitting down and reading the Charlottetown accord which the majority of Canadians rejected?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we wanted to have and we supported the idea of a triple E Senate on this side of the House.

The Charlottetown accord was leading the country to an elected Senate. The Reformers campaigned very hard to make sure that the Charlottetown accord failed. Unfortunately they were successful.

* * *

[Translation]

DECONTAMINATION OF CN LANDS

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on February 21, the Minister of Transport announced that he would permit Canadian National to abandon the rail line along the St. Lawrence at Lévis. The right-of-way operated for 145 years by CN will have to be decontaminated before it can be used for residential development or for recreational and tourist facilities.

My question is for the Minister of Transport. Can the minister tell us now who will pay for the cleanup, CN or the taxpayers?

[English]

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the subdivision around the town of Lévis was slated for closure some years ago. Various governments delayed that, looking at all of the various options.

We studied it very carefully and came to the conclusion it was in the best interest of all concerned that we build another station on the line and allow the line around Lévis to be closed.

• (1500)

The specific question the hon. member asked will certainly be looked at in the terms and conditions of any sale that Canadian National makes to the local community or to local developers.

* * *

CANADA PORTS

Mr. Peter Mancini (Sydney—Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. It has been reported on CBC radio today that ports police officers in Vancouver had planned to review concerns they had about the proper protection of

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those ports with the attorney general of British Columbia. They were advised not to do so by ports Canada officials.

Can the minister advise this House whether his department has been made aware of political interference by ports Canada officials in the ports police investigations in Vancouver?

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious accusation the hon. member has made. If he has any evidence of that, I would like him to bring it forward.

The fact is the phasing out of the ports police has been done to give better policing services at Canada's ports. In fact, some of the criticism that has been levelled has been totally unwarranted because we have been handing over much of the local enforcement to local police authorities across the country, including Vancouver, including Saint John.

I am sure members of the House present from those cities would not question the competence of the local police forces in those cities.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: Colleagues, I wish to draw to your attention the presence in the gallery of the hon. Lyle Oberg, Minister of Family and Social Services of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: There are other ministers here. I need some help.

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it would be nice for the House to welcome Mildred Dover, Minister of Health and Social Services for P.E.I., who participated in the same meeting this morning as Dr. Lyle Oberg.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we have the hon. Minister of Social Services from Saskatchewan, Lorne Calvert.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: This is one of those good days. We have the Deputy Speaker and representatives of the Parliament of Slovakia.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: We also have Bonnie Mitchelson, Minister of Family Services of Manitoba.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Supply

• (1505)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am very honoured to stand in the place of our House leader today to ask that traditional Thursday question. I would like to report to the House that our House leader is healing well. He is in great spirits and we expect him back soon.

We would like to know the projected government agenda for the next several days.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sure all hon. members are glad to hear the hon. member's news.

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I join with all colleagues in wishing a speedy recovery to the House leader of the official opposition and we certainly hope he will be back with us very shortly.

Tomorrow it is my hope that the House can deal with both report stage and third reading of Bill C-21, although this will require negotiation. This is the Small Business Loans Act. In any case, either tomorrow if we are unsuccessful with obtaining third reading or on Monday if we are, we would then do the following bills: the resumption of Bill C-6, the Mackenzie Valley bill, followed by resumption of debate on Bill C-19, the Labour Code amendments, followed by Bill C-15, the Canada Shipping Act amendments, Bill C-20, the competition legislation, Bill S-3 respecting certain financial institutions, and Bill C-12 respecting RCMP superannuation.

Tuesday shall be an allotted day. We plan next Wednesday to call Bill C-25, the defence legislation.

[Translation]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. With all due respect, members of our party would ask that you abide by decisions made previously by other Speakers. It was no doubt an oversight on his part, but the hon. member for the Reform Party had not removed his flag. He was nonetheless recognized. This was certainly an oversight, and I wanted to point this out to you.

The Deputy Speaker: I respect what the hon. member for Repentigny said. He certainly raised a good point. I am sorry, but I did not notice the flag on the desk in front of the hon. member for Elk Island.

Anyway, as everyone knows, this matter was referred to the Speaker, who is now preparing his ruling. I hope that, while he reviews the matter, all members will apply their best judgment and that no problem involving the flag will arise the House during this time, which should not be too long. I hope this answers the question for the time being.

Are there more questions on the Thursday question? The chief government whip on a point of order.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1510)

[English]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—EDUCATION

The House resumed consideration of the motion and the amendment.

Mr. Bob Kilger (Stormont—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been deliberations among representatives of all parties and I believe you would find consent for the following motion:

That at the conclusion of the present debate on the opposition motion, all questions necessary to dispose of this motion be deemed put, a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Tuesday, March 17, 1998, at the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders.

(Motion agreed to)

The Deputy Speaker: When the House broke for question period the hon. member for Kelowna had 15 minutes remaining in his speech.

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise the House that I will be splitting the balance of my time, 5 minutes for me and 10 minutes for the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

What has happened to education? What is ironic about the fact that there is a millennium scholarship fund which does not deal with the substantive issue of education in the country?

The irony was expressed very well in a *Globe and Mail* article of February 21:

There is no more pointed paradox today than that of the tens of thousands of information technology (IT) positions left unfilled in a Canadian economy in which some 1.4 million people are without jobs.

At a time when advertised positions in many sectors draw a deluge of qualified candidates, organizations across the country are having to strategize and scramble to hire vital IT skills.

"This society's use of information technology is growing by 15 to 20 per cent per year, according to some estimates", says Gabriel Bouchard, vice-president of marketing for TMP Worldwide in Montreal. "It's everywhere".

We need information technology. This morning on the front page of the *Globe and Mail* a headline reads \$1,000 if you know the name of a person who can qualify for a competent software position in Halifax.

We have a millennium scholarship fund which does not address this shortfall in our economy. What is happening?

Supply

The executive director of the Canadian Advanced Technology Association, Mr. Nakhleh, said that many of the courses in electrical engineering have not changed since he was a university student in the discipline 25 years ago. In other words, the courses have not changed. We are moving into information technology. It accounts for 15% to 20% of entries on an annual basis and we are still offering the same courses we offered 25 years ago. Something has to be changed.

Universities are not getting the resources to expand their efforts in the field. Quebec has said to the universities they cannot raise their tuition fees and it will not give them more money. That is the government of the Bloc which has proposed this motion today.

There is a bright light. It is coming from private industry. Nortel announced yesterday a scholarship fund of \$360,000 for students pursuing technology. That is the issue. That will provide in the Ottawa area \$3,000 for a summer job and \$1,000 for a scholarship toward university tuition for up to 30 high school students. That will give the budding techies hands on lab experience in Nortel's research and development facility.

The Nortel people, who employ a lot of technology people, have some advice to give to the universities and to our post-secondary technical institutes. Nortel suggests that other priority areas for business and universities include expanding the highly successful co-op work in education programs, internship programs and programs such as distance learning, video conferencing and virtual classroom concepts. These can lower costs and increase student access. Companies could encourage university professors to spend sabbaticals in private sector labs.

We need collaboration, co-operation and partnership among universities, private industry and the general public. That is what needs to happen.

• (1515)

This millennium scholarship fund simply perpetuates what has always been. We need new thinking. We need innovative thinking and Nortel is showing us the way. When will the government listen to the people of Canada and do what is right in the interests of Canada?

There is a whole other area that we have not talked about, the preparation of graduates. There is a shortfall of money in this country today that is available for basic research. This is probably one of Canada's greatest shortcomings.

Canada should be on the leading edge, and is in certain areas, telecommunications, for example, where Canada is recognized as being a leader in the world, and yet as we speak we recognize

universities are being short changed in terms of money for basic research.

Yes, we have the wonderful statement made in the budget where the funding to the granting councils, MRC, NSERC and SSHRCC has been raised to the 1994-95 level.

The minister of industry says this is new money. It is nothing of the kind. It is simply replacing the money that was there in 1994-95. What has this shortfall done? This shortfall has brought about a deterioration of the infrastructure that is necessary for researchers to do their jobs. It has lowered the number of positions available for these researchers. We need to address the shortfall.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must say I was a little confused about the member's commentary about fitting the programs that students are taking to the jobs available.

I fail to see how the need for software programmers, engineers and all kinds of other high tech and knowledge based training that will be necessary is somehow the responsibility of a government.

I have three children. They go to school. I think they are taught in a number of disciplines. They get guidance counselling. They know from their guidance counsellors and from what is happening in their lives where the opportunities are. This is not a secret. It is certainly not the responsibility of the government to somehow conduct some social engineering to steer people into things that we want as opposed to dealing with what they want.

The member concluded, therefore, that the millennium scholarship fund was a failure because it did not address directing students into programs that they want. These are the kinds of things that are the responsibility of the schools before post-secondary. These are the responsibilities of individuals.

The millennium scholarship fund, if the member did not follow the budget, has to do with the issue of accessibility. The member well knows that one cannot simply say we are going to provide all funding for all things we need in the very first budget of a mandate. The direction is here and the priority was established that accessibility to post-secondary education was a very serious problem. With the endowment of \$2.5 billion there was going to be 100,000 scholarships provided over 10 years, not just on the basis of merit but on the basis of need.

It really has to relate to those students who probably have the ability to be successful at post-secondary education. I know this member knows how important that is. However, they are not prepared or able to take on the financial burden because of their personal family circumstances of not only tuition but the living costs and ancillary costs of an education.

I would simply ask the member whether or not he would like to reconsider the issue about not having enough software program-

Supply

mers and whether or not he really believes that this is a role for the federal government.

Mr. Werner Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, I would be delighted to answer that question. If the hon. member will go back to *Hansard* tomorrow or later today, he will recognize that not once did I use the words directed toward students.

What I did say was that this scholarship fund fails to recognize where the shortfall is. That is what I said. The shortfall occurs in the provision to the universities for the kind of resources that are essential to develop. The first is research funds. Second, we need to develop the kind of infrastructure that will attract the students and instructors that are necessary. Third, I also said that we need to be sure that the kinds of courses that are being offered in the universities are ones which the students really need.

• (1520)

The point is that we need incentives. This is not an incentive program. All this does is provide some money and an apparent return of money for the money that the kids lost.

Let me put this in perspective. Every post-secondary student lost when the government cut funds to education. Now comes this scholarship fund which is available to whom, to everyone? Absolutely not. It is available to perhaps 6% of the group. That is not equitable and it is not going to solve the problem of the shortfall. It is not going to provide the universities with the kinds of incomes they need in order to build the infrastructure and develop the instructional talent and skills that will educate our young people toward those kinds of things that will lead them to be competitive in the workforce.

That is what I said and I hope the member listened this time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I realize time is running out but I would like my colleague to explain something to me.

Today's motion deals with the need to respect exclusive provincial jurisdiction over education. I would like him to tell us what his party's position on this issue is.

Does he agree with us in the Bloc Québécois that education is a provincial jurisdiction? I appreciated every point he made and I agree with him when he says that transfer payments to the provinces must be maintained to support research grants in high technology and so on.

Simply put, what is the position of the Reform Party on the need to respect the provinces' jurisdiction over education?

[*English*]

Mr. Werner Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, that is a good question. The answer is that education is constitutionally a provincial responsibility.

We have over the years developed a certain partnership that now exists between the provinces and the federal government with regard to post-secondary education. There was a time before this when federal money was put into vocational high schools in particular. Hundreds of millions of dollars went into that program. The reason it went into vocational high schools at that time was to bring about the educational skills the people needed.

It is the same thing today. We need a partnerships.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House to say how disappointed I am with the motion before us.

Even though I agree with the underlying principle of the motion, its wording prevents me from supporting it.

I agree with the principle of the motion since I recognize that education is an area of provincial jurisdiction and I agree with the Bloc that the millennium scholarship foundation is in violation of this principle.

However, I believe the Bloc erred by wanting to censure any action by the federal government in the area of education. If I could have amended the motion, I would have clarified the issue of transfer payments because the Reform Party believes it is a federal responsibility, which is not clear in the motion.

Besides, I believe the issue of national testing is a separate issue. The relationship between federal and provincial governments in the area of education must be clarified in order to maintain national standards without encroaching on provincial powers.

However, the Reform Party agrees with the Bloc to condemn the millennium scholarship foundation. We believe it has nothing to do with education but everything to do with the political image of the Prime Minister of Canada, who made this announcement two years ahead of time just to look good.

• (1525)

The Liberal government is trying to hide the fact it cut \$7 billion out of health care and post-secondary education, and is making up for these cuts by promising \$325 million a year starting in the year 2000. This money will only help 6% of Canadian students while the other 94% will get no help whatsoever.

Moreover this fund will do nothing to lower the present debt load of students. The average student debt is around \$20,000. A \$3,000

scholarship for 6% of students will not improve the situation very much.

Eligibility criteria are fuzzy. Will the scholarships be granted on the basis of merit or need? If it is on the basis of need, they will overlap the Canada students loan program as well as provincial programs. If it is on the basis of merit, a whole new bureaucracy will be created to decide who will get help.

By making the foundation a private and independent body, the Liberal government is creating a new opportunity for patronage. This fund will only benefit a minority of students, whereas an increase in the CHST would have benefited every student.

[*English*]

As I mentioned in my speech, and I would like to go over that one more time to make it clear, the Reform Party is committed to education. We campaigned on that during the last election campaign. We wanted to reinvest \$4 billion back into health care and education. It is not a question of Reform not being committed to education.

We have seen that on the part of the Bloc too. Its amendment and the direction that it is heading with this motion is quite clear. It cares about education. I would agree with the Bloc. As I mentioned, education is a provincial responsibility. We have said in past debates that the Reform Party would like to get back to the constitutional sections that show exactly what are the provincial responsibilities and the federal responsibilities. We do agree with the Bloc on that level.

I was reluctant. I really wanted to support this motion but it was so vague in its explication of how the relationship of the federal government to the provinces in education would actually develop. There still has to be some sort of a relationship in the area of transfer payments and in the area of potentially national standards. As I said, that is up for debate.

This motion does not at all address that issue and that concerns me. I know that one of the things that educational institutions, especially at the post-secondary level across this country, have had to do is catch up with the heartless cuts that we have seen on the other side of this House. That is something that we can share in our feelings of dismay with the government and this attempt with this millennium scholarship fund. We have no idea who it is going to help and how and what sort of bureaucracy it will create in the process.

In that frustration that we in the Reform Party feel with the Bloc, I can understand and share that same sense of frustration. We want to see more of the responsibilities that are provincial responsibilities returned to the provinces.

It is very, very important that we have this definition clear as to what it will mean when we start changing the relationship between

Supply

the federal and the provincial governments. We are open on this side to that debate. In future maybe the Bloc could have some correspondence with some of the other parties in developing motions. Maybe we can work together to create something better in this country.

I appreciate the Bloc's motion, but I am sorry I cannot support it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would be tempted to contradict, to react strongly to the Reform member's words, but I am obliged to acknowledge two things first of all.

First of all, that in his desire to address the students and people of Quebec, he spoke in French, and I congratulate him on that.

• (1530)

Second, he shows some open-mindedness. He says he is in agreement with the motion because they too would like to see education a provincial matter. But, having said so in French and in English, he then says the Reform Party is demanding \$4 billion more for the federal government's intervention in education. It is an art to be able to contradict oneself within less than ten minutes on an entire position, not just a detail. I would tell the hon. Reform member that, if they want to gain points in Quebec, they will have to be more consistent than this. A person cannot say two contrary things within one speech.

The hon. member from the Reform Party describes our motion as too vague, too broad. I would like to remind him of the wording of our motion: "That this House censure any action by the federal government in the area of education, such as—and here it is very precise—the introduction of the Millennium Scholarships program—to which he has expressed opposition—or national testing". This is the wording of our motion. It is very specific. I am therefore raising the matter of this contradiction.

I would like his help in understanding it better. If he does not see this as a contradiction, fine, but it is obvious that either one agrees that jurisdiction over education is a provincial matter, or one does not. I would then understand a position like the Liberal government's stand on education. It wants to interfere in education precisely in order to gain visibility with young Quebec students.

[*English*]

Mr. Rahim Jaffer: Mr. Speaker, I will try to clarify my point once again for the hon. member who asked me the question.

I do not think I contradicted myself at all. The Reform Party has always said that we have been committed to reinvesting in health care and education. We made that clear during the course of the last campaign. I do not think that has anything to do with the jurisdiction as it relates to the provinces.

Supply

We are not saying how the provinces should spend that money on education or health care. We realize that disparities exist throughout the country in how some provincial governments deal with certain problems. They are most effective in dealing with those problems.

All we have said is that we believe transfers should be continuous and increased to those provinces to allow the provincial governments to supply funds to health care, education or whatever the matter may be. I am not contradicting myself. Actually I am saying that the federal government should remove itself from creating policy on how the provincial governments spend the money once it is transferred to them. I am actually in favour with the Bloc on that point.

When the member referred to the Bloc's motion he himself made it clear that the motion says the federal government should remove itself from all attempts at creating any relationship with the provinces in education. That is what is not clear. As I have outlined, the federal government still has a responsibility for transfer payments to the provinces. That is not clear in the motion. I wish there had been more thought put into the motion because as I said there is something that we could have agreed on in the principle behind the motion.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member caught my interest.

Early in the debate the talk was about increasing the transfers to the provinces to take care of these so-called problems in the post-secondary area. The member mentioned a very important point regarding the fact that there would be no strings attached and they would not be told how to spend it.

Given what happened in the province of Ontario where the reduction and the transfer was only \$850 million yet the tax break passed on was \$4.3 billion, how do we determine whether or not the moneys that are transferred from the federal government to the provincial government are actually used to either enforce national standards or to go to the area into which they were directed?

Mr. Rahim Jaffer: Mr. Speaker, the reason lots of provincial governments have had to struggle in order to make up for the lost funding over the last number of years is that the member's government has cut close to \$7 billion in transfers in education and health care. Unfortunately that is what some of the provinces had to do.

• (1535)

I am of the slate of people who believe in the provinces and believe in the administrations of the provinces to start putting money toward areas where it is needed. The Liberal government should consider giving more trust to the provinces. It should start reinvesting back into them in the form of transfers. Those governments can take care of the problems more effectively than we have seen with anything the Liberal government has created.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to be given the opportunity, by the member for Lac-Saint-Jean, to take part in a debate that is so close to my heart because it concerns the future of young Canadians.

I am all the more happy since I just attended a meeting with provincial social affairs ministers and our discussions with them were very constructive and beneficial to us.

I have been a member of this government for two years. I can tell you that, with regard to social cohesiveness, we have made considerable progress in vital areas that are of concern to all of us, especially those that relate directly to the well-being of people, families and children across the country.

Before going any further, I should tell you that I will be sharing my time with the member for Mount Royal.

Child poverty, the status of people with disabilities, job market development, employability, labour issues, these are all areas where my provincial counterparts, myself and this government have worked together to strengthen Canada's social fabric so we can be ready to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

We owe this progress to the openmindedness, the good faith and the co-operation of provincial and territorial governments, which each have their own concerns, but which also share certain goals and objectives and a common vision of our country.

This vision is the vision of a Canada that is preparing to enter into a new century and a new millennium and that must be able to rely on a population that is strong and well equipped to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

It is the vision of a country that wants to see its young people make a nice place for themselves in a world that is offering them new, almost unlimited prospects.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Saint-Eustache—Sainte-Thérèse, on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron: Mr. Speaker, I remind the member opposite that he must address the issue being debated.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sure the hon. minister, who has prepared remarks, will soon address the motion.

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew: Mr. Speaker, as long as we are talking about co-operation with the provinces, about developing partnerships, and about extraordinary achievements to improve people's skills and knowledge in this country and help us face the new millennium, I am very interested in the Bloc's motion, because this is what we have been doing for the past two years.

The result of the efforts we have all made for a while now in our daily lives are such that economists from the Conference Board and other experts are predicting that Canada will enjoy the best growth rate among G-7 countries. Thanks to a collective effort by Canadians, and to the co-operation of various levels of government, we are back on the road to fiscal balance and prosperity.

The quality of our human resources is as important for the country's prosperity as are our research and development initiatives, and our economic infrastructure. Our collective effort is guided by the vision that we must continue to build on what has been achieved in recent years in the context of our social union, and this is what we are about to do as a government.

• (1540)

In this connection, the Canadian government has a responsibility to support the individual efforts of each Canadian, each province and each territory, to ensure that all citizens of the country have the same opportunities to contribute to collective prosperity and to profit from it individually.

The Government of Canada and its provincial partners have worked very hard in recent years to battle child poverty, as well as to put some order in the manpower area, transferring the jurisdiction over manpower and active employment measures to the Government of Quebec. All of this is part of our effort to modernize our country, to work collaboratively with the various levels of government in order to ensure that our efforts complement each other and share similar goals.

We are moved by a spirit of co-operation, and I feel this is the best service we can render to Canadian society at the present time. The time is ripe for demonstrating that Canadians, Quebecers included, are best served when both levels of government show a willingness to work together in good faith to improve and enhance the future prospects of each and every citizen and to reinforce our social union.

There is no question of interfering in each other's areas of jurisdiction. We are combining our means, our resources and our strengths in order to fulfil Canada's destiny, one which will be more promising than ever. This is the form of federalism I am calling for, one which will equip our country with the tools it needs to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

We shall be approaching the eve of the third millennium in less than 16 months time. We in Canada have chosen to mark this passage from one millennium to another by creating a special non-recurring fund, not part of the permanent program and transfer structure, but one which will provide 100,000 young Canadians over 10 years with the opportunity to earn a post-secondary scholarship of up to \$3,000.

Supply

We are not interfering in education. We are not interfering in curricula, the management of institutions, and tuition fees. I would be the first to object to the Canadian government meddling in education. But it is the responsibility of the Canadian government to ensure equality of opportunity across the country, for all citizens from coast to coast, so that everyone has the best possible chance of pursuing post-secondary studies.

My colleagues and I are convinced that the millennium fund does not duplicate anything already being done by the governments of Quebec and of the other provinces. I want this foundation to complement the provinces' existing mechanisms for defining needs.

I believe in a resolutely modern federalism, a federalism that is effective and respectful of provincial jurisdictions, a federalism that serves the interests of all Canadians. That is why I am going to make sure that the millennium scholarship fund is implemented in a spirit of respect and solidarity and, above all, in the interest of young Canadians.

The millennium scholarships will give an greater number of Canadians from low or middle income families the opportunity to pursue post-secondary education. We will be sure to work very closely with the Government of Quebec. We made sure, as we said in the budget speech, that the foundation responsible would operate independently of the government. Its mandate is to avoid any duplication. We are even prepared to enter into contracts with the appropriate provincial authorities so that they can make the initial selection of scholarship holders.

We live in a country that has decided to invest in the intelligence of the young generation, in access to skills and in knowledge.

• (1545)

When a government turns a millennium celebration into a celebration of skills and knowledge, rather than choosing the traditional course of erecting a monument or whatever, as is done elsewhere, I can say one thing: I see this as a vision, and I think it is a great deal more productive to celebrate the millennium by taking an interest in the generation of tomorrow, in knowledge, because that is what tomorrow's economy, and our country, will need.

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if I were a foreigner—which I may be—and I did know much about the news in Canada and just heard what the minister, for whom I have a lot of respect, had to say, I could only jump to my feet.

In his book, René Lévesque said that it takes 18 months for a Quebec minister to lose touch. I am sorry, but when they talk about co-operation, I cannot agree. There are many federalists, sovereignists and student associations who doubt the effectiveness of the millennium fund.

Supply

I remember that at the last referendum—I was not a member of Parliament yet—I heard many people saying “I will vote no, but if nothing changes, Stéphan—”

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew: In the Lac-Saint-Jean area.

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, I have no qualms about it, my own father voted no at the last referendum but he told me the same thing. He said “Stéphan, I will vote no, but if nothing changes, next time I will vote yes”. Everyone said “Things will change. Things will change”. Nothing has changed.

Now, back to the issue. The second thing the minister talked about was the growth rate. Let us talk about it. It is true that we have a good rate of growth at present, and that corporations are making record profits, according to the stock exchange index. There are numerous economic indicators showing that things are going well and it is true. But why are the members opposite creating poverty as never before?

In 1993, there were 1 million children living in poverty in Canada. Now there are 1.5 million. I wonder what mechanisms they want to use to distribute wealth in this country.

When we talk about the efforts of each and every Canadian, we must be cautious. Often, it is the provinces who make the efforts. But there is something else that we do not talk about often enough. I have done some serious research into the financial crisis that countries are going through, like Canada. I believe that countries, and not only Canada, are becoming poorer every day.

Why is it that in the 1950s, the corporate sector paid almost 49% income taxes and that its share has dropped to 7% today?

No wonder citizens have to pay so much tax and income tax. It is because some are not paying their share. Who benefits from economic growth? It is the corporate sector, businesses. I think this warrants serious debate, but it is not the subject of debate today.

As I said earlier, if I came from somewhere else and were listening to the minister’s speech, I would think it a fine speech. It is like finding someone hurt on the side of the road and offering a bandaid. A praiseworthy gesture. It takes courage to apply a bandaid, but perhaps it would be an idea to disinfect the wound first.

The Bloc’s opposition to the new loans and grants program is not because students should not be helped. We are saying they should be helped efficiently and the most should be made of every dollar invested in education. But what are they doing instead? A system of loans and grants already exists in Quebec. It is one of the most effective in Canada, not according to me but to the president of the Canadian students association. But what are they doing? They are sabotaging that system by cuts in transfer payments to Quebec.

And then they cause duplication by setting up another system of loans and grants.

I therefore ask the minister: Where is the co-operation?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew: Mr. Speaker, that is the fundamental reason why I decided to go into politics, this co-operation that the minister—

An hon. member: He is not a minister yet.

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew: Excuse me. That the member for Lac-Saint-Jean is talking about. You do have a future. That is good. I wish you the best. And we will see if it takes 18 months to adapt.

• (1550)

Essentially, my role within the Canadian government as Minister of Human Resources Development is to redistribute the wealth and to allow Quebecers, among others, to benefit from a broader Canadian tax base in the area of manpower, which we have transferred to the Quebec government. Even though Quebecers pay 23% of contributions to the employment insurance fund, the budget that was transferred to Mrs. Harel, in Quebec, represents 31%. That kind of redistribution of wealth is certainly in Quebec’s favour.

The same thing applies to the national child benefit. We are helping families in Quebec and we are even giving Mrs. Marois more leeway so she can implement her own family policy in that province.

I am telling you that millennium scholarships will have the same impact. That program will give money to students who want to pursue their education, and it will do so in close co-operation with the Quebec government, who will make the first selection. It will be able to make that selection using its own system of evaluation. It is all written down in the budget.

We remain true to this vision of Canada. I think it is an extremely comforting way of contemplating our future.

[English]

Hon. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is quite something to follow our Minister of Human Resources Development. He is a most articulate as well as competent spokesperson in the interests of the well-being of transferring wealth in a fair and equitable way across the country, except sometimes I think Quebec gets more than its fair share. Notwithstanding that, as a Quebecer I am pleased to see some improvement in the state of the nation in Quebec.

Let us look at the level of unemployment. The level of unemployment of our young people between 15 and 24 years of age increased from 13% in 1989 to 18.9% in 1996.

*Supply**[Translation]*

That is an increase of nearly 50%. Moreover, young people with a low qualification level are more affected. For example, 56.4% of income security recipients under 30 years of age did not finish high school.

This last fact must be considered in the context of certain data on the evolution of jobs in Quebec according to the education level required. Between 1990 and 1997, data show that the number of jobs requiring a post-secondary or university degree increased by 471,000, whereas the number of jobs requiring a lesser level of education decreased by 384,000.

[English]

Let us look at the combination of those figures. There has been a dramatic change in the employment portrait in Quebec for many reasons. We are looking at 855,000 job shifts, 471,000 in the interests of those who have post-secondary education and a loss of 384,000 for those who have not as yet finished their secondary education. There is also a 56.4% dropout rate.

These are figures from Madam Harel with whom I had the pleasure of working at the anniversary of the black community resource centre. We discussed the importance of education and the importance of addressing the changing world of work in which we live.

Young people today need the proper kind of training and advantages so that they can face the new millennium with the newest of skills and the latest of technology at their fingertips. If they do not have that, the potential for no jobs or poor jobs indicates a very sad reality for them. It becomes more and more important to look at what we can do to prepare people through education.

Epidemiologists say that one measures a healthy society in the kind of efforts we put in as a government. It is regardless of which government because basically members on all sides of the House are really interested in the well-being of the people. It is a matter of how the well-being of the people is interpreted.

- (1555)

Our perspective of the well-being of people is we looked at the millennium fund. As the minister so eloquently stated, rather than putting it into bricks and mortar, into fancy designs or houses or buildings, we have decided to invest in our intellectual capital.

We are investing in our young people so that tomorrow they will be able to face the world in a far more constructive and open minded way. They will change jobs two or three times, unlike the situation with my generation where we took a job and we were there for life or until we got our gold watch at 65. Now they will have to look at other options in life.

The millennium scholarships fund is very exciting and dynamic. It is responsive to a changing world. It shows we are a government

with a vision which has been building along with governments before it on helping the future of our country. It is your future and my future, your businesses and our businesses. It is extracting from the best the guidelines to the future for our families.

As I listened to much of this debate and the questions, I asked myself what I would think if I were an ordinary citizen in the world. Would I not believe that investing in my children and grandchildren was the most wonderful thing a government can do? Would I not believe if the government plans for the future well-being of our total society by addressing the futures of those young people, that it is investing in our well-being?

Epidemiologists say that a well educated society is a much healthier society. It will reduce the costs of our social services and health services. It will improve the quality of life within our society. That is why the finance minister has ensured a program of quality and worth which is worthy of praise rather than condemnation.

I lived for nine years on the opposition benches. I lived in opposition and I know it is the opposition's task, its job and its responsibility to pick and to criticize. But even when I sat on that side, if something of quality was presented, I found it within my conscience, within my right and within my responsibility to respond to the needs of my electors, that even if I did not want to thank the government, at least not to use the kind of negativism I have been hearing from the other side of the House. It is a shame.

This is one of the most exciting and dynamic approaches we could possibly want for the young people in my riding. It is offering them an incredible scholarship procedure. This is part of the building tool. I hate to make it so mundane as to say it is the icing on the cake but really it is the top of the layers we have been building in the hope for the future.

- (1600)

[Translation]

We should look at the approaches that could lead to a better future for our children and guarantee that we will not have a 56% dropout rate, which is appalling? This will not help anybody in Quebec and is not in our best interests.

I do not care what your political views are or whether you are a man or a woman. The parents of these children do not see a very bright future ahead. These children will have to go elsewhere to get what they need. Perhaps they will turn to drugs or to something else because they do not have a vision of the future.

[English]

Young people can be given a chance, particularly those from low and middle income families, by being offered finances. We should ensure that they will be able to get through university training, that they have the qualifications to do it.

Supply

We are a city that has a most delightfully exciting cultural mix with bright, intelligent young people who in many instances are unable to look to the future. They do not see being able to afford a post-secondary education whether in college, university or a retraining program.

There is much in the millennium scholarship fund. Hon. members should refer back to what the minister had to say and to the budget books we have seen. In the end, even if they have to stand and cross their fingers because they are in opposition, I am sure they will find it to be an absolutely extraordinary undertaking.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron (Saint-Eustache—Sainte-Thérèse, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment on what the hon. member for Mount Royal, who is a very wise member of this House, said.

In her comments, the hon. member dared to lecture us, and with good reason. I too feel very uncomfortable with the antics in this House and I agree 200% with the hon. member.

On the other hand, the hon. member for Mount Royal told us to look at the budget and added that it did not make sense in a state like Quebec to have such undereducated children and all the rest. I must tell the hon. member for Mount Royal that I did look at the budget. What was done about family trusts in order to help our poor children? What was done about the tax breaks enjoyed by certain corporations in order to help poor children get a better education? What is being done?

I too would be very uncomfortable to rise in my place and say: "We are doing a lot". Three thousand dollars a year for some students beginning in the year 2000? That money is needed today, not in 2000. I too would be uncomfortable. I too would be unhappy to pass on messages and blame people. That is not the objective of our debate. The millennium fund does not make sense since it will start only in 2000.

Secondly, we have the necessary tools to manage the money. Why spend money? It should go to the students. They should be given money to go to school, not a meagre \$3,000 a year.

I have a question for the hon. member. How will she manage to make more money available to each and every government in Canada? Instead of cutting transfers, how can they give money to these governments so they can help poor people and the middle class?

• (1605)

[*English*]

Hon. Sheila Finestone: Mr. Speaker, my sense is that this is an important undertaking. I enjoyed the fact that the Bloc Québécois decided to use this opportunity to discuss in the House what has been done in the interest of children, youth, and seniors in society.

The government chose to put \$2.5 billion in a fund to be administered outside the government by quality leadership and with representation of youth and of the provinces. This was at the request and consideration of the Council of Education Ministers.

Members choose to ignore the tax credits and child programs. We have put \$1.7 billion into the enriched child tax credit. We have undertaken to ensure libraries and schools are interconnected with the Internet. Every school will have a co-ordinator. I find it sad that they cannot stand and say they agree because a lot has been done.

First and foremost we have a balanced budget. We have been able to put in order the finances of the nation. It was not an easy task. It was not easy for the population. The people of the country tightened their belts and had less discretionary funds. They contributed to putting the financial house in order.

Once the foundation is there we are able to build without undue cost. We can move to further solidify that foundation and enrich our society through the intellectual property we have with good grace.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise after my Bloc Québécois colleagues in this debate on a motion moved by my party. The motion reads:

That this House censure any action by the federal government in the area of education, such as the introduction of the Millennium Scholarships program or national testing.

It is no secret that the famous millennium scholarship program announced in the recent Martin budget is a personal initiative of the Prime Minister who would like to draw the attention of historians away from other less glorious deeds of his going back to the Trudeau era.

Well, it seems that he will not make his mark in history books with this program which is being widely condemned by provincial governments.

This comes after his attempt to destabilize the sovereignist movement in Quebec with a Supreme Court referral, a political football he deflated when he said yesterday it was a thing of the past. He was being asked about the eventual designation of the Progressive Conservative Party leader as the leader of the Quebec Liberal Party.

I urge the Prime Minister to re-examine very soon his strategies, like he has done for the Supreme Court referral, and to listen more carefully to what students and their associations are saying in Quebec. They all ask him to do his homework concerning the millennium scholarships.

One of the student federations that have condemned this program is the Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec, whose

president Nicholas Ducharme said it was no more than an exercise in visibility and a purely political operation.

He goes on to say that the federal government is duplicating existing structures. I can only agree with the federation that the federal government should have invested this money which comes from Quebec in the existing loans and scholarships system in Quebec. This is the Bloc Québécois position.

• (1610)

Quebeckers have not been fooled. They know the source of the problem, of the difficult financial situation which Quebec students are in, and it is, as we all know, the massive cuts in transfer payments made by this government.

Quebec has made major investments in its young people in the area of education. It has made some efforts to maintain tuition fees and student debt loads at reasonable levels and, in that regard, we have no cause to be jealous of the situation in the other Canadian provinces.

Indeed, tuition fees are about \$1,700 a year in Quebec, while they average some \$3,200 in the rest of Canada. This significant difference explains why students in the other provinces are often in a more difficult situation than Quebec students. The average student debt in Quebec is \$11,000, compared to between \$17,000 and \$25,000 in the rest of Canada.

To counter this situation, the Chrétien government ignored its commitments at the last first ministers' conference and decided to intrude once again in a provincial jurisdiction.

What is the prime minister's word worth? An appropriate answer would lead me to use unparliamentary language. I leave it up to you to answer it in all honesty.

We in the Bloc Québécois consider that all Quebec students who want to further their education deserve some help, and this is the approach favoured by Quebec with its loans and grants program. That is not the case with the millennium scholarships, only a third of which will go to low and middle income students, and which will be awarded mainly on the basis of merit or excellence.

This new duplication in the area of education concerns me a great deal, especially for my region.

The Conseil permanent de la jeunesse recently specified in one of its studies that the Lower St. Lawrence, the North Shore and the Saguenay would see their population decline by 10 per cent by the year 2016. This phenomenon is not new, but it seems to be increasing. Thousands of young people will emigrate to urban areas. We must help our regions keep their young people and it is

Supply

the governments closest to these people that are in the best position to know and to initiate the corrective actions required.

I will not surprise anyone by saying that in outlying areas there is a problem created by the fact that young people are leaving. In the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region, we are trying to slow the process by developing our university as well as the colleges in Chicoutimi, Jonquière, Alma and Saint-Félicien. We know full well that we have to offer a wide choice of education programs geared to the local job market and to regional development, in order to convince our young people they do not have to leave to study and to pursue a career.

It has been demonstrated that students who complete their studies and enjoy good employment opportunities in their region have a good chance of staying. The association of alumni and friends of the University of Quebec in Chicoutimi offers scholarships to graduate and postgraduate students to encourage them to pursue their studies in the region.

In my region and in all of Quebec, we have been trying for a long time to promote access to higher education through a scholarships and loans program. Also, by staying in their region students can save money by living at home with their families.

If the federal government wants to meet the real needs of our young people, it should transfer the money to the Government of Quebec.

• (1615)

It is clear that the millennium scholarship fund proposed by the Chrétien government is out of touch with the Quebec reality, as are many other federal programs. In that area as in manpower training, the Government of Quebec must hold the levers of power to better meet the challenges of the next millennium.

It must be said loud and clear: the millennium scholarships will not improve the quality of post-secondary education or substantially relieve the financial hardships of the students in our region. This misdirected program is a waste of money.

This \$2.5 billion would have been better used if it had been handed over to the provinces, which are in a better position to know the education sector's priorities and needs. Moreover, these needs are being felt right now and will not appear only at the beginning of the next millennium.

As I said previously, in cutting its transfers to the provinces, Ottawa struck a real blow at the funding of Quebec's educational institutions. Out of the \$10 billion cut from education, \$3 billion was in Quebec.

I sincerely believe that we in Quebec must focus our efforts on our education network, which was hard hit by these cuts.

Supply

The Quebec loans and scholarships system is very efficient. This is certainly not the time to make financial assistance to students more complex.

Just as he did with the reference to the Supreme Court, the Prime Minister could change his mind, review the millennium scholarships program and at least hand over management of this fund to those provinces that want it.

I remind the Prime Minister that he is the first and only Canadian Prime Minister to jump head first into education, an exclusively provincial jurisdiction. That is another action by the Chrétien government that will be remembered.

I ask my colleagues opposite to think twice before they interfere again in this area, because they will face all Quebecers early in the year 2000.

The Quebec population will not forget this new interference on the part of the federal government. There will be a final evaluation in the next referendum.

Madam Speaker, I should let you know that I am sharing my time with the hon. member for Lévis.

[*English*]

Mr. John Bryden (Wentworth—Burlington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed the remarks of the member for Jonquière. I would like to ask her a hypothetical question.

I think she would agree that a national government has to be concerned about all Canadians even if she feels very strongly that her first allegiance is to the people of Quebec. Nevertheless a national government, as on this side of the House, has to be concerned about all Canadians.

Recent tests in science and mathematics conducted across the country disclosed that students in Quebec scored higher than the national average on mathematical and science questions. Other provinces, particularly my own province of Ontario, scored very low.

If it were turned around and Quebec students had scored very low as the result of governments of Quebec which had not paid enough attention to education whereas other provinces were much higher in the quality of education that the students were receiving, would it not be right and proper for the national government to want to intervene in order to ensure that those students in Quebec receive the same quality of education as was received elsewhere in the country?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold: Madam Speaker, I thank my kind colleague for his question.

I believe he did not understand what I just said. I want to tell him that everything regarding education has always been well managed by Quebec and the provinces. What happened to education is that transfer payments to the provinces were cut. I said it before in my remarks. With its cuts to transfer payments the federal government made a mess of education.

Let us decide what we want for our students. We want nothing but the best. We are parents and we are close to our children. We know what they want and what they deserve.

• (1620)

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I also listened to the comments. I am absolutely astounded that the member spent all her time talking about jurisdictional authority and boasting how the provinces are the ones that are most aware of the needs of students.

The member may know that with regard to youth unemployment, university graduates in Canada under age 25 have an unemployment rate of about 6.5%. University graduates in Canada as a whole have an unemployment rate of only about 4.5%. High school graduates have an unemployment rate of about 15%, and high school dropouts have an unemployment rate in excess of 20% and in fact peaks at about 23%.

Notwithstanding that this member suggested that the provinces know best how to deal with the needs of our students, this member probably does not know, but should know, that the dropout rate of students from high school in the province of Quebec is almost 40%.

The member should also know that high school dropouts represent Canada's poor in waiting. These are the people who will be totally dependent on the rest of the taxpayers because they have not got the education they need.

The member totally ignored the concept of accessibility of post-secondary education, which is the focus of the millennium scholarship fund. It is not necessarily to provide assistance for existing educational programs or to provide financial assistance with student loans, et cetera. It is to address the issue of accessibility for those students who are unable to take on any amount of financial responsibility but have the ability to attend post-secondary education.

I would ask the member whether or not she agrees that the issue of accessibility of education is also an important priority which any level of government should have in its portfolio.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold: Madam Speaker, I believe the member misunderstood me.

Supply

I have been saying since the beginning that education is an area of provincial jurisdiction. In the past few years, the government has had the nerve to cut transfer payments to the provinces for education to the tune of \$3 billion to Quebec alone.

The member has the nerve to tell me “Would it not be right and proper for the national government—” Let us take care of our own, we know what our students want.

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to support the motion of my young colleague, the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean. It is all nice and dandy to have a debate, but we must deal with the issue. The motion reads as follows:

That this House censure any action by the federal government in the area of education, such as the introduction of the Millennium Scholarships program or national testing.

The motion is clear. That is what it says. Let me give you my reasons for supporting it. First, as everyone knows, the Millennium Scholarship Foundation, which will begin in the year 2000, is primarily designed to give visibility to the federal government in the year 2000. Federalists anticipate that a referendum could be held in Quebec that year, or the year after.

The federal government is trying to influence young Quebecers, because it knows that the last time, polls conducted by the CEGEPs always showed that over 75% of young Quebecers supported sovereignty. We are no fools: this is the real purpose of their millennium scholarship fund.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean for his motion, and the other young Bloc Quebecois members. Five of them are under 30, which is unlike what we find in any other political party here.

• (1625)

We have five young members who are doing a mighty fine job. All day long, they led the debate. Since other speakers were required, they had to call on some of us in our fifties. I feel comfortable participating in this debate because before the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean took over as the Bloc Quebecois critic on training and youth, it was my job.

I will remind the House that, in those days, 15,000 Quebec students had rallied on Parliament hill against the reform proposed by the then Minister of Human Resources Development. There were students from all parts of the country, but more than 10,000 were from Quebec. Why point this out? Because last night, on the news, I saw college students rallying in Quebec City because they are concerned about potential cuts—they have a budget to balance in Quebec too—in education.

I take this opportunity today to say that cuts were made in education and health because cuts are required in Quebec like in every other province. Ask our colleagues from New Brunswick and western Canada. All the provinces have had to make cuts in education and health. Why? Because the federal government, which tried to cut \$48 billion just before the election, eventually cut \$42 billion through the Canada social transfer.

What does this Canada social transfer include? It has three components: social assistance, health and education. In education, \$10 billion was cut back. Quebec's share, on the basis of its student population, came to approximately \$3 billion for that period. A \$3 billion cut in education was imposed on Quebecers. And this year, the Minister of Finance has the gall to establish a millennium scholarship fund and a foundation to administer it, spending \$2.5 billion right now for this purpose. This amount is slightly lower than the cut made previously in Quebec in particular. And this is going on across Canada.

The objective is to provide assistance to 100,000 students starting in the year 2000. This will mean assistance for about 24,000 students in Quebec. But there are currently more than 300,000 full time students enrolled in university. Add part-time students and the total number of students in college and university rises to 500,000. What should be done about all those who will not benefit from the scholarships?

I was listening earlier to the Minister of Human Resources Development. I know this is not one of the minister's idea, but rather a pipedream of the prime minister—who shall remain nameless—who woke up one night and wondered what he could do for students in the year 2000. He came up with this initiative, convinced that it would keep up his good image and reach the sovereignists among the students and manage to confuse them somewhat. It could work in some cases.

Last week, I went to visit the Sainte-Foy cegep in my riding, where I met students and realized that some of them are in fact confused. These young Quebecers were wondering if, as sovereignists, they should turn down a grant if they were among the lucky ones to benefit from the millennium scholarship fund. I told them no, but do not let the federal government fool you and keep a critical mind. I know young Quebecers have a critical mind. They know how to read, they are educated and intelligent. They will not be fooled by this razzle-dazzle federalists are using to fool them and get them on their side.

In his speech today, the minister of Human Resources Development said that Quebec stands to lose its current structures, even though they are the best in Canada, Quebec students carrying half the debt load of the students in the rest of the country. Quebec is the only province to provide grants to 70,000 students for an average of around \$3,800. No other province does it. The debt level is lower and the Quebec system is recognized as offering good financial assistance.

Supply

• (1630)

But now, since only about 6 per cent of students across Canada will benefit from the program, they want to leave it to Quebec, and maybe to the other provinces as well, to decide who will get a scholarship and who will not, because the number of scholarships will be limited to 3,000. Millennium goodies. They want Quebec to get on board so it can get blamed by those who will not get a scholarship, while the federal government will enjoy greater visibility among those who do get one.

No, the people of Quebec will not be deceived by this new attempt. They will not respond to the fantasies of the present Prime Minister, who at the same time follows plan A by distributing millennium scholarships or, with regard to regional development, by continuing to issue grants or loans to Quebec small businesses without consulting regional councils or taking their strategic plans into account, always with a view to promoting the maple leaf among Quebec people and businesses in order to obtain their political support.

As long as Quebec remains a part of the Canadian system, we will ask for our fair share. Yes, we will accept financial aid coming from Ottawa because we pay for it. We pay our share of taxes, and as long as we continue to do so, we will demand programs, even those we criticize.

I remember criticizing Youth Service Canada at the time of the referendum, and the Minister of Human Resources Development then told me: "Yes, but why is the member for Lévis criticizing a program which benefited an agency in his riding"? Yes, we must accept this system, even though it creates duplication, even though it competes with the provincial systems and does not respect Quebec's people and their convictions.

Why are we so protective of our education system? It is a question of language. What do we teach in our schools? We teach the Civil Code and different traditions. In spite of the goodwill of some of the members across the way, they are not listening, they do not understand that we are different. We may not be unique, but we are different.

It is not only a question of provincial jurisdiction. It is about respect for Quebec's distinctiveness, which they never accepted and are now trying to submerge with little flags, with stunts such as the one that occurred on February 26, and by issuing checks to about 24,000 young students.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Calgary—Nose Hill, Canada Pension Plan; the hon. member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Employment Insurance; the hon. member for Wild Rose, Young Offenders Act.

[English]

Mr. John Bryden (Wentworth—Burlington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to the member's remarks. I am quite willing to agree that the French culture in Quebec is a very important and different part of Canada, something we would want to cherish.

I hope he will agree that a university education is more than the French language and more than learning about the civil code. A university education is about learning the sciences, medicine, history and all kinds of disciplines.

One of the problems with Quebec's situation with respect to grants to students is that these grants are basically exclusive only to Quebec. It keeps students in Quebec.

Would he agree that the millennium fund and all the money that it gives to students will give opportunity for young Quebecers to go to universities of their choice, not only in Canada, but elsewhere in North America? It will underwrite at least some of their educational costs. They will benefit from the experience.

Is it not a good thing to give young Quebecers the opportunity to broaden their minds by experiences elsewhere in the country?

• (1635)

[Translation]

Mr. Antoine Dubé: Madam Speaker, I believe the speaker before me spent some time at McGill University. It is in Montreal.

His intentions are good, but that is not the case.

An hon. member: It was another member.

Mr. Antoine Dubé: I am sorry. Let us forget that, it has nothing to do with it.

Nevertheless, if he has not been, he should visit Quebec from time to time. He would understand that we are different. He would understand very quickly that we are different. It is true that medicine is science. In that regard, it is the same science.

He would also see that a good Quebec doctor recognizes Quebecers' health problems are not the same as those of other people elsewhere. That is an everyday occurrence.

Culture is not about language and the civil code. He is right on that. I remember Guy Rocher, who said "Culture is a way of thinking, feeling and acting". I watch my colleague from Repentigny, who speaks on foreign affairs and trade. Business is handled differently in Quebec.

Supply

We are not abnormal. The Japanese are like that. It is true for people in business, or other sectors. Our country and our culture make us different. We must honour that.

In Quebec, education is vital to us. It enables us to continue to be different because we want to be and not because we detest others. It is not that we do not want to get along with others. We simply want them to respect us as we are, just as we are ready to respect you as you are.

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague for his speech. He clearly showed that this is an unwarranted interference of the Liberal government in the areas of jurisdiction of the provinces, namely those of Quebec.

I would like to remind my colleague of the fact that the Liberal Party opposite is not the only one to interfere in the areas of provincial jurisdiction. The Conservative Party does it too. I will quote from the plan of the Conservative Party on page 33: "A Jean Charest Government will help ensure that all Canadian youth receive the basic knowledge and skills they need for their futures by instituting a Canadian Education Excellence Fund". I repeat: "A Canadian Education Excellence Fund".

Does my colleague agree that the Liberal Party is not the only one to interfere in areas of provincial jurisdiction, but that the Conservative Party and the whole federal system are doing it too?

Mr. Antoine Dubé: Madam Speaker, I will take a few seconds to remind the House that the motion proposed by the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean also deals with national testing.

When I fulfilled the responsibilities now held by my colleague, the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean, we fought very hard against national standards. I have a lot of respect for the New Democratic Party, but the NDP members then supported the national standards.

This is how the Bloc Québécois differs from the other parties. These parties represent a majority from the other regions of Canada. People in this country must realize, and it is obvious when one travels a little, that there are two countries, two different cultures. There is one in Quebec, and one elsewhere in Canada.

Mr. Nick Discepola (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first I wish to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for London West.

It is a pleasure to speak to this motion by the member for Lac-Saint-Jean. The pleasure does not stem from my agreement with the motion, but rather from the opportunity it gives me to underline some of the contradictions expressed up to now by members opposite. They contend that the federal government has no business in education, that it should simply hand the money over to the province and forget about it.

• (1640)

Our government thinks otherwise. We strongly believe that we have a role to play, as we have been doing for many decades, in educating and helping young Canadians.

[*English*]

As the year 2000 draws near, various countries are looking at different ways to celebrate and mark the beginning of the new millennium. To give one example, the city of London, England, is looking at ways to celebrate their event and is considering building a dome at the cost of several hundred thousand dollars.

Our government, on the other hand, has taken a different approach. We have decided to invest in the future of our country by giving young Canadians the opportunity to achieve their full potential through access to training to meet the ever more challenging demands of the next millennium. This is something that the Bloc Québécois have a hard time understanding.

[*Translation*]

Nowadays, we are facing a most formidable challenge which we cannot avoid: competitiveness. Given the global economy, all workers must be highly skilled, because only those who can produce faster, better and cheaper have access to the markets.

The opening of borders, or even their gradual elimination, created a whole new attitude toward trade that industrialized countries must deal with. We believe that we must rely on the creativity, the imagination and the innovation of young Canadians to continue to carve out an enviable position in the knowledge-based economy.

Traditionally based on the development of natural resources, Canada's economy now depends increasingly on knowledge rather than resources. That is how we will be able to help create stimulating and well paid jobs for young Canadians.

The Government of Canada has a responsibility to support and encourage those who want to participate fully in the new economic, cultural and social environment in which we will be living from now on. That is what we undertook to do, and the Canada millennium scholarship foundation is one of the ways Canada can face up to this great challenge.

Bloc members, especially the member who moved the motion, are again making a mistake they made repeatedly in the past. They confuse access to education and education itself.

The role of the Canada millennium scholarship foundation will be to eliminate the obstacles limiting access to post-secondary education or to training in advanced technology, which are essential to get a good job in the new economy.

Supply

Nowhere is it mentioned that the foundation will interfere in education programs. As the Bloc members say, we know that education is a provincial responsibility, and the foundation's vocation fully respects this fact.

However, for decades, the Canadian government has been playing a role in the area of financial assistance for students, because it strongly believes that access to education must be enhanced through a concerted effort.

Preparing young Canadians to enter the new economy is a collective responsibility. This is not the prerogative of any level of government and should not be the subject of the narrow dogmatism which too often characterizes the Bloc's actions, as is obvious in the motion before us.

Of course education is a provincial jurisdiction. Programs as well as institutions and the quality of the teaching fall within the domain of the provinces. However, federal and provincial governments alike have long been working to promote equal opportunity by supporting the people who cannot afford to pursue their academic training.

Has that system served us badly so far? I do not think so. Canada has already undertaken to address the challenge of globalization and its efforts have been quite successful. Last year, Canada ranked fourth out of 35 countries for its competitiveness, according to the World Economic Forum.

Obviously, several factors contribute to such a performance, but the quality of our manpower training plays a very major role. The establishment of the millennium scholarship fund does not change anything in the workings of the present system and, contrary to what the Bloc Quebecois always claims, it does not encroach in any way on provincial jurisdictions.

• (1645)

The role of the federal government in this dates back to the post-war years, not February 24, 1998, the date of the last budget.

As the Minister of Finance has clearly explained, the Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation will be an entity at arms-length from the federal government. It will be administered by a board made up of members from the private sector and including one student. The Council of Ministers of Education, representing the provincial governments, will also be involved in the selection of directors.

It goes without saying that the foundation will consult closely with the provincial governments. What is more, the post-secondary sector will also be involved in designing and awarding the Canadian Millennium Scholarships.

Members will recall the Minister of Finance placed particular emphasis on the federal government's desire to avoid duplication in this area. We have done this continually for more than four years in other areas, and will continue to do so.

[English]

We will also remember the reaction of the Quebec minister of finance to the tabling of the last budget. As he did last year, Mr. Landry accused us of practising predatory federalism. Always given to verbal exaggeration, he added another adjective, abusive. His words predator and abusive may have rhymed in French but they are really a joke. The words he uses to describe the budget and the millennium fund are frankly laughable.

According to that same minister of finance, this was a budget of a unitary state which completely discards federal structures. I wonder if we can consider him to be serious.

There is no federation in the world where the central government does not play a role in financial assistance for students. For example, in the United States of America 75% of public scholarships and bursaries for students come from federal government assistance. In Germany 65% of publicly funded bursaries and scholarships are federal. What is more, in both of these countries the central government plays an even more direct role in education. That would never be the case in Canada, since we understand that this is a field of exclusive provincial jurisdiction.

All governments are called on to play a role in this field. It is crucial to the future of our children and our country.

It does not really surprise me that Bloc Quebecois members cannot understand that. That they have presented this motion today surprises me even less. If it suits them, the Bloc and their PQ head office do not hesitate to denounce supposed predatory federalism. However, when the PQ government accepts hundreds of millions of dollars from our government to pay for damage caused by the ice storm, the adjectives are different.

[Translation]

Alain Dubuc put the real question as follows in *La Presse*, and I would like to quote him because it is an excellent summary of our position. He writes: "Can Quebec, which has no economic strategy, logically, just for the sake of being different, refuse a project expressing in a dynamic way the importance of university education and knowledge? One suspects that the main fault in the federal project lies in it being just that: federal".

I believe that Quebec's young people share the same aspirations as young people anywhere else in Canada. They want to achieve their full potential in order to take an active part in improving society. Let us not saddle them with our own limitations, our old

quarrels; let us instead encourage them to equip themselves to build a better future.

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the member for Vaudreuil—Soulanges. He spoke eloquently about the importance of education, young people in Quebec, and so on and so forth.

• (1650)

He seems to have forgotten some of his history, which is still relatively recent. It goes back to 1964 when the federal government gave Quebec the option to opt out. In those days, the federal government's trust in Quebecers, their administrators and democratically elected representatives was greater, since it allowed Quebec to have the money it wanted and which was Quebec's anyhow—it is our own tax money—to be administered in Quebec. The federal government had been trusting us since around 1964. These Liberals were elected five years ago and they have been trusting the Quebec government since then with this opting out clause under which they hand over the money to Quebec to be used for loans and bursaries.

Loans and bursaries are granted on the basis of family income. This is equal opportunity: if a family is unfortunate enough to have a low income it will not be penalized when it comes to sending its children to university or cegep because it can avail itself of the loans and bursaries program made possible in part through the opting out clause given to us by the federal government in 1964.

After 34 years of sound management and solid infrastructure put in place by the managers of the Quebec loans and bursaries program, what we are asking is for the millennium scholarship program to be transferred to Quebec under the opting out clause in order to improve our loans and bursaries program in keeping with our philosophy, which is to help Quebec students, not according to how many A's and B's they have on their report cards, but according to their family income, as we are doing now, giving them equal opportunity.

What we are asking regarding the millennium scholarship program is to follow the same principle we have been following for 34 years and apply the same opting out formula to the amount as before. If the position of the federal government, which knows how to spend money, is the same as the member for Bourassa, who said he did not trust Mrs. Marois and democratically elected representatives in Quebec, it should have the honesty to say so. Otherwise it should explain to us why it is questioning a formula which has been working for 34 years. This is my question to the member from Vaudreuil.

Mr. Nick Discepolo: Madam Speaker, we really see the politics behind the motion. We really see the concerns of that political

Supply

party. For these members, the issue is not concern for the future of young people, but instead the opportunity, and I have seen this in the last four years, to fan the flames of some so-called federal-provincial squabbles. I wonder whether they are more concerned about the future of young people than about receiving the money to help them.

The program put forward, as has already been the case for the last 30 or 40 years, is not a matter of federal or provincial jurisdiction. We are not intruding in the administration; we are not telling a province which education programs it has to implement and which books it has to buy. The millennium fund is aimed at giving a better future to young people. It gives them the opportunity to pursue post-secondary studies to better prepare their future.

If Bloc Quebecois members are really concerned about the future of young people, they will have to do what was done in the past, that is co-operate with the federal government, and we will be able to agree on the process and the administration. The Canada students assistance plan is already working well in Quebec. Quebec is managing it and, in the other provinces, it is the federal government that deals with it. There are other examples. With regard to the GST, we have administrative agreements with the provinces. Therefore, if they are really concerned, they should think about the future of young people instead of the future of separatists.

[English]

Mrs. Sue Barnes (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canada is part of a fast changing, competitive and interdependent world economy, an economy that is increasingly knowledge based.

• (1655)

This is not only because of new high skill jobs and high tech industries but there has been a steady rise in skill requirements in all sectors of the economy and in most types of jobs.

The facts speak for themselves. Since 1981 jobs for Canadians with a high school education or less dropped by two million but more than five million jobs were created for those with higher qualifications. Not all Canadians are in a position to easily access the knowledge and skills they will need throughout their lifetime to find and keep the jobs in a very different and changing labour market.

Barriers, most often financial, reduce access to post-secondary education for many of our students across this country. While the government cannot ensure that every Canadian will succeed, the government can enhance the equality of opportunity.

Supply

That is what our government has done in the 1998 budget. It has introduced a Canadian opportunity strategy which builds on actions in the 1996 and 1997 budgets and it also introduces historic new measures.

The costs of post-secondary education have risen dramatically over the past 10 years. Tuition fees and other student costs have more than doubled and those with low and middle incomes often face a difficult choice, the no win situation of forget higher education or incur onerous student debt.

This is no win for both the individual Canadians facing this dilemma and for Canada's economic future. The Canadian millennium scholarships are the centrepiece of the Canadian opportunities strategy. They are the single largest investment ever made by the federal government to support access to post-secondary institutions for all Canadians.

Through an initial endowment of \$2.5 billion the arm's length Canada millennium scholarship foundation will provide scholarships to over 100,000 students each year over the next 10 years. Scholarships will go to Canadians who need help financing their studies and who demonstrate merit.

For full time students scholarships will average \$3,000 a year and individuals can receive up to \$15,000 over a maximum of four academic years. The Canada millennium scholarships could reduce the debtload that recipients would otherwise face by over half.

Canadians of all ages, full or part time, studying in publicly funded universities, community colleges, vocational and technical institutes and CGEPs will be eligible for the scholarships. The foundation will begin to award these scholarships in the year 2000.

The government is also introducing Canada study grants. These recognize that many student needs are not fully met by scholarships and student loans. Beginning in 1998-99 Canada student grants of up to \$3,000 a year will go to over 25,000 needy students who have children or other dependants. These grants will help fund both full and part time students and will cost \$100 million annually.

Nothing is more critical to Canada's economic successes in the 21st century than vigorous, broad based research and development. I am a firm believer for all types of R and D in Canada, both basic and applied science.

To support graduate students and researchers as they develop the leading edge skills needed in a knowledge based economy we will increase funding to the three granting councils to provide research grants, scholarships and fellowships. Over the next three years their combined budget of \$766 million in 1997-98 will be increased by over \$400 million.

By the end of the year 2000-2001, the council budgets, I am happy to say, will be at their highest level in Canadian history.

Student debt has become a heavy burden for many Canadians. In 1990 a graduate completing four years of post-secondary education faced an average student debtload of about \$13,000. By next year the same graduate's average debt will almost double to \$25,000. At the beginning of this decade less than 8% of student borrowers had debts larger than \$15,000. Today and in the near future almost 40% do. That is a heavy load to carry into your future.

Last December federal and provincial first ministers agreed something must be done to reduce the financial burden of students. They asked the federal government to take action in the 1998 budget and we did. I must say that the universities and colleges in London, Ontario are very grateful that we have, and I know parents of future students are very grateful. Down the road, all Canadians will benefit from these highly skilled people.

• (1700)

First, students will get tax relief. There will be a 17% federal credit for interest paid on the student loans.

Second, we are increasing the income threshold used to qualify for interest relief on Canada student loans by 9% and more graduates will be eligible.

Third, we are introducing graduated interest relief which will extend assistance to more graduates further up the income scale.

Fourth, for individuals who have used 30 months of interest relief, we will ask the lending institutions to extend the loan repayment period to 15 years.

Fifth, if after extending the repayment period to 15 years a borrower remains in financial difficulty, there will be an extended interest relief period.

Finally, for the minority of graduates who still remain in financial difficulties after taking advantage of these relief measures, we will reduce their student loan principle by as much as half.

Together, these new interest relief measures will help up to 100,000 more borrowers and over 12,000 borrowers a year will benefit from debt reduction when this measure is fully phased in.

To keep their job or to get a new one, many Canadians who are already in the workforce may want to take time off from work to upgrade their skills through full time study but often lack the resources to do so. Several new measures will improve Canadians' access to learning throughout their lives.

It will start with at least six million Canadians who have RRSPs with total assets of \$200 billion. To those people looking to further their education, this represents an important source of their funds.

Supply

Beginning on January 1, 1999 Canadians will be able to make tax free withdrawals from their RRSPs for lifelong learning.

An individual who has an RRSP and is enrolled in full time training or higher education for at least three months during the year will be eligible. Individuals will be able to withdraw up to \$10,000 a year tax free over a period of four years to a maximum of \$20,000. To preserve the role of RRSPs in providing retirement income, the amounts withdrawn will have to be repaid over a 10-year period. In many respects, this plan resembles the home buyers plan.

The need to continually upgrade knowledge and skills can be particularly hard for the growing number of Canadians studying part time and trying to manage the difficult balance of work, family and study. We are proposing two new measures to help those people. Beginning in 1998, the education credit will be extended to part time students. They will be able to claim \$60 for each month they were enrolled in a course lasting at least three weeks and including a minimum of 12 hours of course work per month. The measure will benefit up to 250,000 Canadians.

In addition, for the first time, parents studying part time will now be able to deduct their child care expenses. I think this is important. There are certain limits but it is important because previously only full time students were eligible to do this. This measure itself will benefit some 50,000 part time students with children. Any long range plan to acquire knowledge and skills for the 21st century must look ahead to the students of tomorrow and the best way to help those children's futures is to save for their education today.

That is why we have registered education savings plan contributions for children up to the age of 18 to a maximum grant of 20% on the first \$2,000 in annual RRSPs.

It is unfortunate that I have limited time left. This budget deals with youth employment and offers \$250 million over three years for information technology—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): A point of order, the hon. member for Rosemont.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I remind the member that we are debating the motion and I am going to take a minute to read it to her:

That this House censure any action by the federal government in the area of education, such as the introduction of the Millennium Scholarships program or national testing.

[*English*]

Mr. Robert D. Nault: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

This is the second or third time that the Bloc has done this. I just want to make it very clear to the new member in the House that we cannot talk and say millennium every two seconds to make him feel happy. There are a number of issues within the education field that are part of this whole process.

• (1705)

Mrs. Sue Barnes: Madam Speaker, the Canadian opportunities strategy does provide a diverse and comprehensive set of tools.

This is a debate about education. It is a debate for all Canadians across Canada who have to understand the tools now available to them through the budget. There will be the millennium scholarship plan. There are also all the other measures in the budget. All of them are equally important and will provide access to education to those students in Quebec who maybe are not going to hear about it from their representatives sitting here who want to talk solely about what will happen in the year 2000 with our millennium scholarship.

I am here to say I am happy that students of Quebec and students across this nation, no matter who they are represented by, will have access to the scholarship fund and all the other tools.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, it will be difficult to comment. I feel as though I have listened to a budget speech.

However, I am going to speak about all sorts of things. I have the impression that members speak but do not listen. I do not know. There is much talk, but it looks like people are trying to paint the members on this side of the House as the bad guys. They say: "Heavens, Bloc members do not seem to think education is important".

There are some things we can talk about, but we must be specific. I want to emphasize that the Bloc Québécois also thinks education is a key sector, one in which we must invest, and I cannot say so often enough. If we want a qualified workforce and people who are not ignorant, and so on, if we want a strong society, we have to start with access to education. That is the first step.

We agree on that. Yes, some good points have been made by the members across the way and we agree fully.

I am fed up. We have heard this all day; we have been accused of not thinking that student indebtedness is important. We have even been accused of not caring about the future of young people. If there is one person concerned about the future of young people, I think I qualify.

We covered a lot of things. What we want to say today is not that students should not receive assistance. It is the form the assistance takes. It is the relevancy of providing assistance and the best way of providing it.

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I made the point again today: the taxpayers already pay enough taxes, and probably much more than enough. They hope that the best use possible will be made of every tax dollar. When the federal government cuts \$10 billion with one hand and gives back 25% of this amount—they call this an investment, but one might call it spending—with the other hand, I cannot help but wonder where the other 75% of the money went and if it went into fighting the deficit. These are the type of questions I ask myself.

There are other aspects which I feel were only briefly touched on. My hon. colleague did not even address today's motion. Another important aspect is the fact that the scholarship will be handled by a private organization. What is the use of having elected members here if, when there are complaints about the work done by the administrators, we are going to be told "Look, we cannot do anything about it. This is a private organization". Some democracy. Why bother electing members? Universities are in the process of being privatized.

These are immediate comments, but I will have more to make later. I could go on for an hour. However, at the request of our colleague across the way, I will give the hon. member opposite the opportunity to reply.

[*English*]

Mrs. Sue Barnes: Madam Speaker, he doth protest too much. Honestly, when hon. members on the other side of the House get to choose the subject and choose to talk about education and scholarships, I am going to canvass the subject.

• (1710)

We have just had an excellent budget. In that budget there were excellent avenues for people across this country to not only save for education for their children but to access it, and if they are a part time or full time student, to access finances and get relief. There was opportunity for lifelong learning through the registered education savings plan. There are going to be the biggest investments ever by a federal government in the post-secondary educational system. It is wonderful for Canadians.

I find it perplexing that anybody could be so upset when the students in their riding are going to have the benefits of this. I am very glad that we are here as a government to assist those students.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Angela Vautour (Beauséjour—Petitcodiac, NDP): Madam Speaker, I must unfortunately say that I cannot support the Bloc Québécois' motion. I will explain why. For us, national programs are very important and we have our reasons to care about them.

We must think about the regions that need help. People pay taxes and the federal government must be there to help them when necessary. I believe it is important to maintain transfer payments. But the money must be put back in the education system, so that young people will not, as is often the case now in our country, stop their education because they cannot afford post-secondary studies.

Young people, the lucky ones who have the means to go to university, can do so, as well as those who can borrow money, but they end up \$25,000 in debt. There are graduates in my riding who owe \$31,000 and \$51,000. How can we expect them to succeed on the job market? You have a hard time job-wise when you are saddled with a \$51,000 debt.

National programs definitely need to be maintained. One should not assume they are there. These programs must be maintained. It is unfortunate that we have a government which, in recent years, decided that post-secondary education was not very important for low income Canadians.

And the war goes on. As regards social programs, there is a two-tier system not only in education but also in the health care sector. Already, there are many medical programs and services that used to be free, but for which we must now pay.

There are waiting lists for day surgery hospital beds, which are not really used for that purpose. People who can afford to pay to remain in hospital can stay, while those who cannot must leave. Often women must stay home to take care of those who were not ready to leave the hospital. That is why national programs are there, to provide the same opportunities to all Canadians.

I am very proud to be Canadian. Coming from a relatively poor family, I must say that I wonder sometimes if the poor are considered as Canadian as the wealthy in this country. Considering the direction in which the Liberal government is going, it is very clear that the less fortunate in this country do not have equal access to social programs and are not treated as they should be.

The same thing applies to those on welfare. We have national programs and we should keep them. We have people who have no job and are unable to find one. We have a government that is not interested in creating jobs, and now it is taking away the only thing these people have left, the social programs. This must stop.

[*English*]

The new millennium fund outlined in the recent budget illustrates the federal government's failure to recognize the value of education and its failure to consult with student groups and the provinces to develop realistic, workable solutions to barriers in education.

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• (1715)

[*Translation*]

Student debt has increased. Personal bankruptcies among students have increased by 700% between 1989 and 1997.

[*English*]

Twenty-five per cent of all bankruptcies were the result of student loans. As at the end of 1997 there were \$37,000 bankrupt graduates. In the recent budget the number of bankruptcies of graduates are projected to be 216,000 students by the year 2003.

[*Translation*]

We see a lot of students who cannot repay their student loans. In my riding, I could have two full time employees just to deal with that. Students are being harrassed.

Students cannot find jobs. These people who can only find part time jobs or seasonal jobs in areas where such jobs exist are asked to make monthly payments of \$200, \$300 or \$400, and some of them cannot find any job at all. They are getting telephone calls from financial institutions that want their money. These institutions show no mercy. And students are scared of personal bankruptcies.

We often hear people say that young people abuse the system, that they go to university and then declare personal bankruptcy. In any program, there will always be people who abuse. That has always been my position. But nobody should believe that most students who graduate intend to declare bankruptcy.

Young people come to my office. They may not be so young any more, because they have graduated five, six or seven years ago, and still do not have a job. The last thing you can tell them is that there are no jobs, that they must pay \$400 a month, that there is no money coming in and that it is their option. They do not have any choice, really.

[*English*]

Instead of providing real assistance to reduce student debt and increase accessibility, the budget actually included measures to make things harder for students in debt. The Liberals have now extended the period for which student loans survive bankruptcy from two years to ten years. The budget included measures to deal with students with severe credit abuse.

[*Translation*]

We must ask who is going to benefit from this.

[*English*]

Two years after the Liberals announced their youth employment strategy, 48,000 fewer young people are working.

[*Translation*]

The youth unemployment rate stands at 16.5%. Tuition has gone up 41% since 1992.

When I graduated from college in 1980, my debt load was less than \$3,000. I was able to pay it off and I even found a job. Right now, some students end up with huge debt loads, no future, and no job in sight.

We should take a look at what is going on in education. A company in the Halifax area is paying a headhunter to find skilled workers, because it cannot find people with the proper training. This is a real problem, and we should be realist about it. There is no strategy.

Sometimes, when I meet with small business people, I ask them: "When you are looking to hire, is there some communication between departments to make sure that if job opportunities exist and if jobs are created locally, there will be properly trained people to take up these jobs?"

With millions of unemployed Canadians, how can it be that 20,000 vacant positions cannot be filled? Somebody is taking us for a ride. I think we should review the situation, and see what is going on.

• (1720)

Some people are not doing their job and I do not think it is the members on this side of the House. It may be the people who are running the country and not making job creation their number one priority.

Since unemployment insurance was reformed, 730,000 people were forced to go on welfare. We were told the reform was necessary, that the system was no longer meeting the needs of our society. I can tell the members that the 730,000 people who are now receiving welfare benefits because of this reform used to enjoy a program that did meet their needs. Nowadays, they have to do without such a program.

It is often said that the people who are on welfare are caught in a vicious circle and can no longer get back to the labour market. Just imagine the monster we have created.

[*English*]

What would the NDP do about this? I am sharing my time with my colleague, so I will leave it at that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont, BQ): Madam Speaker, I must say that I am disappointed by the speech the hon. member made today. She just praised the national strategies where the federal government is meddling in provincial areas of jurisdiction and seems to approve the millennium scholarship fund announced recently.

I have a very simple question to put to her about the criteria on which the grants will be allocated, mainly income and merit. As a

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progressive member, who also believes in equal opportunity and access to university, does she think the merit principle will make university more accessible to all young Canadians and especially young Quebecers?

Ms. Angela Vautour: Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague, scholarships should not be granted on the basis of excellence.

But I must add that the millennium scholarships are for the year 2000. If we admit that students have a problem today, these scholarships should be awarded right away. If a young student is having a hard time right now to finance his education or to access post-secondary education, this will not help him in any way. I have checked with young people, and they say this will be of no help whatsoever.

The reason I got scholarships back in 1978 is that I came from a poor family and I did not have any money. It is ridiculous even to think we should help students whose parents can pay for their post-secondary education. These scholarships should help reduce the gap between people in need, and people who need no help. I have to agree with my colleague's position.

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I sponsored the motion this morning. I will disagree slightly with what my colleague just said. He said that he disagreed with the NDP member.

One thing is certain, she spoke from the heart. I believe she made the kind of speech we do not hear enough of here. She lives in an area where there may well be more poverty than elsewhere in Canada, and perhaps she cannot accept it because she sees it so closely. I feel that there is a serious problem in this House, and when she talks about it, she speaks from the heart, with great feeling. I think we should hear more speeches like that in the House.

We seem to be accepting the fact that to be a productive society we also have to have a certain level of poverty, that to be a productive society we have to let our children live in poverty, that we have to let child poverty grow and that there is nothing we can do about it. I remind the House that four years ago, there were 1 million children living in poverty and that today there are 1.5 million of them.

● (1725)

I do not believe there is nothing we can do about it. I was going to say that we buried our heads in sand. Like ostriches; that is sometimes the impression I get.

In my opinion, speeches like this one are taken far too lightly. I cannot be unmoved. Yes, we have some differences of opinions on national standards and our views might be slightly different, but I

cannot remain seated and claim that what she said did not make sense, because it made a lot of sense, I believe.

Ms. Angela Vautour: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Bloc for his kind words.

You might say he hit the nail on the head. It is true that I do not necessarily project the image of a politician. My background certainly did not prepare me to be one, but I must say I am certainly as well qualified as any to represent the people of my riding.

Those who elected me are people who have needs, who need national programs, who need help. They count on me to see to it that those programs are maintained.

[English]

Mr. Rick Laliberte (Churchill River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I concur with my colleague that the motion needs to be reconsidered. There is no national vision of education. The federal government has devolved its constitutional responsibilities to the provinces.

The province of Saskatchewan guarantees in the education act to teach our children until they are 21 years old. However, if they happen to graduate from high school at 17 or 18 years old, that funding or support stops. It should not stop when they receive their high school diplomas.

The guarantee to 21 years of age should be taken literally for all young Canadians. They should be guaranteed a state paid education until they are 21. If the provincial education jurisdictions receive funding through federal government transfers, it could be made available.

Let us look at the educational journey. At the secondary school level our children are just starting to be prepared in terms of their world view of their education and career journeys. We can look at an education in trades or in university. A bachelor degree is the result of a student being tested on what is being taught by the institution. At the masters and doctoral levels individuals begin to develop original thought. Journeymen, craftsmen and artists who study their trade or crafts can excel at higher levels.

After children leave high school they need guidance. I would like to share my vision of the guidance given by aboriginals to their children. It was a vision of sharing the land of Canada. They guaranteed the educational rights of their children. That is what we should do for all Canadians, guarantee the educational rights of all our children. This is a national vision.

The hon. member for Rosemont mentioned that the millennium fund could be a step toward privatization. It is unfortunate but true. We have local school boards and boards of governors representing the views of communities all over Canada, and they give the responsibility to a chief executive officer of Chrysler. That is not a vision of education. That is industrialization and privatization of education. It should be given to our communities.

There is also the French language. My cultural background is Metis. I speak Cree because that is what my parents spoke—

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): I must, unfortunately, interrupt the hon. member at this point.

Pursuant to the order made earlier today, every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply is deemed to have been put, and the recorded division is deemed to have been demanded and deferred until Tuesday, March 17, 1998, at the end of Government Orders.

It being 5.30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1730)

[*English*]

OBSERVANCE OF TWO MINUTES OF SILENCE ON REMEMBRANCE DAY ACT

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Ref.) moved that Bill C-279, an act to promote the observance of two minutes of silence on Remembrance Day, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise to speak to Bill C-279, an act to promote the observance of two minutes of silence on Remembrance Day.

I rise to speak to this bill with a heavy heart. Many Canadians and parliamentarians will ask why it is necessary for this place to consider a bill to formalize what is regarded as a widespread and widely accepted custom, namely the observance of moments of silence on November 11, a custom which originated in the British empire and was then adopted by the Commonwealth since Armistice Day which marks the ending of the first and great war in 1918. The reason I bring forward this bill is precisely that custom, which is so deeply entrenched in our history, is increasingly falling out of practice.

It is not to exaggerate for one to say that many young Canadians have become disconnected from our history, from our traditions and, in particular, from a proper appreciation of the enormous sacrifices made by our war dead in the two great wars.

This is an observation that I draw not only from anecdotal evidence which I suppose any member of this place may be aware of. One might easily be aware of the growing degree to which people are not taught about the great military history of this country and of the enormity of the sacrifices made by our war

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generations. It is not simply an anecdotal observation, it is borne out by recent public opinion research.

In fact, what led me to consider introducing this bill was a recent public opinion survey conducted by a new research institute called the Dominion Institute. It recently asked young Canadians a number of questions about Canadian history. They were rather simple and straightforward questions. The questions were what we would assume would be absolutely essential to any kind of historic and cultural literacy about this country.

What the poll found, among other things, was that among young Canadians, teenagers and those in their early twenties, 64% did not know the name of our first prime minister. Only 15% knew when our Constitution was repatriated from Great Britain. When asked to name two countries which Canada fought against in the first world war, 39% guessed France and Britain. One in ten had no answer at all.

When they were asked questions about the interment of Japanese Canadians in the second world war, 68% had no knowledge of this.

The results were shocking. Sixty-five per cent did not know what D-Day stands for. Only 35% of young Canadians know that it stands for the invasion of Europe at the end of the second world war.

Sixty-nine per cent of young Canadians did not know that the battle of Vimy took place in the first world war. That was perhaps the most important battle in the great and glorious military history of this country.

Sixty-seven per cent of young Canadians surveyed by the Dominion Institute did not know which war Remembrance Day marks the end of.

• (1735)

In other words, we have allowed a creeping ignorance to develop not only in young Canadians but I would argue within our citizenry as a whole about the enormity of the sacrifices made and the central importance of our military history. It is for that reason that I have brought forward this bill.

The Dominion Institute suggested, among other things, that one of the remedies that could be found to increase an understanding and appreciation of our military history would be to formalize the increasingly disrespected custom of the solemn silence on Remembrance Day.

In many Canadian schools, in many Canadian workplaces, in many retail shopping malls, in many public spaces, in many public squares of Canada, one can pass by the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month with the normal hubbub of human activity with hardly a moment's notice.

Many Canadians, many tens of thousands of Canadians, recognize Remembrance Day. They gather around the cenotaphs and memorials. They gather at the Legion halls in their communities

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across this country. They remember and they stop for a moment of silence to pay tribute to their war dead.

However, many millions more do not pay that tribute. If we owe one thing to those who died for this country and for our freedom, it is to remember them. It is to remember the struggles in which they fought.

I was also moved to bring this bill when thinking about a recent experience I had shortly before Remembrance Day last year. I was at the Lester Pearson airport in Toronto and observed at the entrance to the security area of the airport a elderly veteran with his Legion hat and poppy. He was trying to offer poppies to passers-by, to travellers entering the security area of the airport.

I watched this man who must have been in his early eighties who likely fought in the second world war. He stood there with a forlorn expression on his face for some time because traveller after traveller passed him by and did not even acknowledge this man, this hero of the second world war.

I stood and watched for several minutes. Not a single person approached him, regarded him, commended him or spoke to him. Not a single person bothered to stop and take a poppy from him.

It brought me great sadness to think about what must have passed through this man's mind as he saw these busy travellers, business people, Canadians all, none of whom seemed to even have a moment's notice for him and the sacrifice he and the poppy represented.

That is why I think we must make, in this country, a concerted effort to pay proper respect to our war dead, to revive the tradition of a fulsome national commemoration of Remembrance Day which was really a moment in years past.

Shortly after the second world war this entire country and every other country in the British empire, now the Commonwealth, would stop in their tracks at 11 o'clock on Remembrance Day. Every business place would shut down. Factories would stop their equipment. Cars would pull to the side of the road. Local and national broadcasters would cease broadcasting.

Every place one went there would be a remarkable national silence not just around the cenotaphs in the various communities but in every place where Canadians were; in private or in public this sacred moment of observance was respected.

• (1740)

With this bill, I hope this Parliament will begin to call on all Canadians to respect once more that tradition in a way that it deserves to be respected. I also bring forward this bill as part of a growing concern among not only Canadians but our friends in Great Britain.

Two years ago the British Westminster Parliament, our mother Parliament, passed a motion which was very similar to my private member's bill as part of a major national campaign launched by the Royal Legion to increase in a dramatic way the observance of what is known there as Armistice Day.

The Royal Canadian Legion has launched a similar campaign. It has called on the federal government to help sponsor a two minute wave of silence that will sweep across the country at 11 o'clock on November 11 beginning on Remembrance Day 1999.

The Royal Canadian Legion, on behalf of its 533,000 members, has therefore endorsed this bill and urged this House to pass it.

Recently the provincial legislature of Ontario passed a private member's bill sponsored by Mr. Morley Kells, MPP, bill 112, which is almost identical to the bill before us. This bill from the Ontario legislature received royal assent in October.

What this bill would seek to do is not require anything of Canadians, not coerce them or create a new government program or bureaucracy but simply to invite and encourage them on behalf of our war dead, in expressing our gratitude to the many dedicated men and women who bravely and unselfishly gave their lives for Canada, to stop for two minutes and observe the silence.

The bill provides a number of practical suggestions as to how this might be done, by participating in the traditional Remembrance Day commemoration at a memorial or cenotaph, by pulling to the side of the road if they are driving, by gathering in common areas in their workplaces to observe the silence, to stop assembly lines where possible, to shut down factories for two minutes.

We have recently read stories in the newspapers about how unions and employers have struck agreements to continue working through Remembrance Day and to no longer respect it as a statutory holiday let alone a moment of silence. It encourages schools, colleges, universities and other public institutions to observe the silence and it encourages Canadians to attend services held in places of worship.

The bill is a very simple one. Some might say it is merely a symbolic thing and that it is not our business to be involved in encouraging respect for symbols. However, in observing the current controversy we are experiencing with respect to the Canadian flag and its place in this House and in this country, we can see how enormously powerful symbols really are.

For that reason I call on all my colleagues and all Canadians not to be flippant about symbols such as this but to consider the need to increase and deepen the understanding of the sacrifice represented by Remembrance Day by taking every step we possibly can to invite all Canadians to do honour to the war dead such as Colonel McCrae whose words from *In Flanders Fields* are inscribed just outside the walls of this place and whose statue we pass every day on our way into this place.

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Let us resolve, hopefully with the passage of this bill, to begin to do greater honour than we have in recent years to the sacred memory of our war dead.

• (1745)

Mr. George Proud (Hillsborough, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this bill this evening. I can say that it is not often that we get the chance to debate a matter over which, almost by definition, there will be a great deal of consensus. I suspect that no one in the House today would offer any objection to the principle of honouring our veterans with a two minute observation of silence on Remembrance Day.

Among the most fortunate Canadians of this century are those who were born in its latter half. A good number of them represent a generation of citizens who have never known war, who have never known the threat of tyranny, who have never had to give up their youth and risk their lives on foreign soil. For the first 50 years of this century, Canadians citizens did not have such good fortune.

Those who were born at the turn of the last century would suddenly find themselves thrown on to the bloody battlefields of Europe. Tens of thousands perished in the trenches of France and Belgium and died in the hell of no man's land.

When bullet and bayonet did not get them, then cold, exposure, injury and disease did the job. Over 60,000 men would not come home. Mothers and fathers would see their beloved no more and a nation would lose the flower of its youth.

[Translation]

When the guns of this terrible war, which was to be the war to end all wars, were silenced at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, a tradition was born: to take a moment on the anniversary of the Armistice to remember those who gave their lives.

[English]

The poignancy and the need for that tradition will be reinforced again and again by the tragedy of another world war just two decades after the first, and with the Korea conflict a scant a few years later. So every year we are called on to remember, to attend Remembrance Day ceremonies on November 11, to pay tribute to the memory of more than 100,000 who gave their lives for this country.

For the generation of Canadians in the second half of this century, peace has been their good fortune. As the baby boomers grow up in a nation whose prosperity was guaranteed by those who came before, as has been said, it has become easy perhaps in the business of raising families and pursuing economic opportunities to push the thoughts of history, war and remembrance into the background. In the 1990s, as we approach the millennium, there

has been a renewed interest in our history and in those who were willing to fight and to die for their country.

Perhaps the catalyst for this renewed interest was the 50th anniversary activities a few years ago commemorating the events that led to the end of the second world war. Canadians from coast to coast saw the blanket television coverage of their veterans, of their fathers, grandfathers, mothers and grandmothers who returned to the old battlegrounds and the old memories. They saw the incredible scenes of welcome in France and Belgium and especially The Netherlands where the Canadians were cheered on and thanked again and again for helping to liberate that small beleaguered nation. Those scenes touched the hearts of all of us.

Interest and attendance at our Remembrance Day ceremonies here at home have also been on the increase. More and more families in cities and towns all across Canada are taking the time to go the local cenotaphs, bow their heads and listen to the solemn ceremonies of remembrance. Particularly heartening is the appearance of young people, those who have never known war, but who now want to take time out to acknowledge the sacrifice of their parents and their grandparents.

I fully support the intent of this bill which promotes two minutes silence each Remembrance Day. I also like the notion of the collective time out where most of the people in the community can stop for a moment to remember. A period of quiet will ensue as neighbours think about the sacrifices of the veterans from their own town or village. Except for matters where safety and health may be involved, I foresee very few situations which would preclude such a unique possibility for community remembrance.

[Translation]

Imagine, all the people in grocery stores, shopping centres, schools, factories, recreation centres, stopping to observe two minutes' silence to reflect on the meaning of the sacrifice.

[English]

As the hon. member for Calgary Southeast has pointed out, this is not a new concept, just a reinforcement of a custom that has been on the wane in Canada for many years.

• (1750)

Actually we are not alone in this. As has been said, the British in recent years have made great efforts and with great success to encourage renewal of this practice. The British people have embraced the idea with great enthusiasm. So, too, have our Australian cousins. They recently revived and encouraged the continuation of the tradition whose origins date back to 1919.

This bill is also in keeping with the Royal Canadian Legion's proposal to the government to officially proclaim a national two minute silence each November 11 at 11 a.m. The move to have all

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Canadians stop what they are doing and remember the sacrifice of Canadian servicemen and women follows the incredible success of the Royal British Legion's campaign to promote remembrance among its citizens.

It is quite a delicate matter debating legislation requesting people to pay their respects. Quite appropriately, this bill does not try to force people into an act of silence but merely promotes the idea and suggests ways in which Canadians can stop and take time out.

It is an idea whose time has come and with proper nurturing and encouragement, I think the idea will catch on. Two minutes of silent observation is not asking very much of our citizens and our businesses. I believe it is a renewal of a tradition that is long overdue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maurice Godin (Châteauguay, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, to speak to Bill C-279, an act to promote the observance of two minutes of silence on Remembrance Day, a bill introduced by my colleague, the member for Calgary Southeast, Alberta.

We do not oppose the bill. I do not intend to speak at great length, however, because I have trouble understanding the need for such a bill, and particularly what purpose it serves. Why two minutes, and not three or four, since the point of such an observance is not the number of minutes spent, but the ongoing remembrance of an event, keeping alive the memory of those who sacrificed their lives for peace? One solid minute seems fine to me.

In fact, I even wonder if we will not achieve the opposite effect by prolonging the time spent in reflection. We all know that one minute of silence in a crowd including children and the elderly, in temperatures that are not always ideal, too hot or too cold, often seems to go on for a long time, and that, after 50 or 55 seconds, people start to fidget or whisper. What will happen if another minute is added?

I fear that the effort required on such an occasion would be too much for some people and that the dignity to which we are accustomed might turn to indifference. Moreover, this period of silence originally lasted for two minutes. Indeed, history tells us that the observance of a period of silence used to last two minutes. The custom originated from a recommendation made after the first world war by a South African statesman, Sir James Fitzpatrick.

Mr. Fitzpatrick, who was very fond of vast spaces, spent a great deal of time reflecting in the silence and solitude of the vast plains of his native land. It is there that, while thinking about the past, he came up with the idea that people should observe two minutes of silence to honour the memory of those who had given their lives for their country.

Today, during the traditional Remembrance Day ceremony, on November 11, one minute of silence is observed at 11 a.m., because a period of two minutes would have the drawbacks mentioned earlier. People stand in silence for one minute and think about all those who gave their lives in the fight against tyranny and oppression.

This minute meets the objective pursued, which is to remember those who paid the ultimate price for freedom and peace. Furthermore, there are so many veterans who are unhappy with the current program, which is so complex, that this House should really be concerned with the true daily issues confronting these people. I can assure you that having an additional minute of silence is not one of them.

● (1755)

We regularly receive complaints from veterans or their survivors, who are entitled to a pension and have to wait months to get it. The department should cut the red tape, as Bill C-67 on pension reform intended in 1995.

The department should be encouraged to provide programs with broader scope, which are more easily administered and more readily understood by their beneficiaries—programs that meet the needs of an aging population of veterans.

I am including the veterans of the merchant marine. They took part in world conflict and were not treated fairly from the start. There are obvious discrepancies in our system, and the government should acknowledge the efforts of the merchant marine and the vital role it played in the wars.

These sailors fought hard to receive the same treatment as the veterans. The government should recall the role they played in restoring peace in the world and given them equal access to benefits.

In December, I supported the motion by my colleague from Kamloops, Motion M-75, which proposed the government consider "giving to the members of the MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion and other Canadians who fought with Spanish Republican forces in the Spanish Civil War between 1936 and 1939, the status of veterans under the federal legislation and making them eligible for veterans' pensions and benefits".

Despite their sacrifices and acts of individual heroism, Canadian veterans of the International Brigades are not yet recognized as war veterans. Therefore, they were never entitled to any veterans benefits and were never given any credit for having fought for the liberty and democracy we know and enjoy, here in Canada. It seems most appropriate to recognize these people who volunteered to fight for justice and democracy.

Another inequity of the system is that we recognize veterans from the war in Vietnam, but not those who fought in Spain. Did we have better reasons for getting involved in Vietnam?

I am thinking also of the soldiers who served in peacekeeping operations and whose status is not well defined. Over time, the most consistent element of our foreign policy and defense policy has been our commitment to peace and security in the world. The active participation of Canadian Forces in peacekeeping missions has directly contributed to ease tensions in hot spots around the world.

Canada sent troops to such remote areas as Kashmir, from 1949 to 1979, Western New Guinea in 1962-63, and Yemen in 1963-64. From 1960 to 1964, these troops were involved in such sensitive operations as expelling mercenaries from Katanga and preserving the territorial integrity of what was then the Belgium Congo and is now the Democratic Republic of Congo. I am thinking about those who fought in Cyprus in 1964 and witnessed the atrocities of the war between Turks and Greeks. There are many others such as Bosnia, Haiti, Iraq, Koweit, Yugoslavia, etc. I do not have enough time to name them all.

These soldiers have not had the same benefits as veterans of both world wars and the Korean war. Before trying to add one minute of silence, it would be preferable for the House to grant equal status to all veterans.

In conclusion, I believe there are many shortcomings in the Department of Veterans Affairs, a lot of work to do. As for Bill C-279, an act to promote the observance of two minutes of silence on Remembrance Day, I believe the tradition already in place meets our commitment to remember those who gave their lives in the name of peace and justice. Let us strive instead to correct the injustices of the current system.

• (1800)

[English]

Mr. Rick Laliberte (Churchill River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to speak on behalf of the veterans affairs critic who could not be here and also portray our party's favour in recognizing two minutes of silence. It is very crucial in the issue of remembrance of the sacrifices that were made by the young men and women who faced the atrocities of war to find peace. The two minutes of silence should end in a celebration of peace because peace is the essence of harmony and the fulfilment of a good life.

I would like to reflect on the land we presently occupy and the nations that occupied this land for generations. Along the Great Lakes there was a confederacy of united nations. A great law of peace guided their society, their government, their activities and

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their relations with other nations. The original five nations which are now called the Six Nations Confederacy lived under the law of peace. They held the might of their strength. The arrow was a symbolism of armaments. But those armaments and the military might were in the name of peace, not in the name of war.

In our history of the Canadian military and the Canadian government we have had glimpses that we are willing to sacrifice our might and our diplomacy for international peace. We have shown leadership and have been recognized as such.

Speaking on remembrance, let us also remember the many people who sacrificed themselves, left their families and the comfort of their homes to go to the front lines. Upon returning home, as the hon. member for Chateauguay mentioned, our veterans faced inequities and injustices.

One of the other groups of veterans I would like to bring forward is the aboriginal veterans, the First Nations, the Metis, the Inuit. Brothers in arms, sisters in arms took the risks and sacrificed, but on coming back the injustices started. The distribution of grants and allocation of land to these people were not fair. The access to pensions and recognition were not given to these men and women.

[Editor's Note: Member spoke in Cree]

[English]

Our languages were used in combat as well by the aboriginal code talkers. If a Cree person or a Dene person spoke to another on the other side of a radio line, people in the rest of the world could not figure out what they were talking about. This was done in the allied forces for the democratic freedom of all our people. Our languages are gifts of our Creator. We used those gifts to get a speedy recovery from the illness of war, to find peace. These are gifts that can be used to find a peaceful end.

In remembrance of the aboriginal veterans, I call on this country to recognize them. Let us give remembrance to them by giving them equal opportunity as all other veterans of this country.

• (1805)

In the two minutes of silence, as we challenge our children to remember, also celebrate peace. I challenge my colleagues to take up that message because once we have finished the remembrance we have to celebrate peace. This is it. We have it. Cherish it, nurture it and carry it on. We cannot take it for granted. Celebrate it.

In memory of all veterans and all people who gave their lives on the many battlefronts recognized and unrecognized, I give my support to Bill C-279. Hopefully as a nation we can rise above the ashes of war and keep peace into the new millennium and for thousands of years to come.

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Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-279 which promotes the observance of two minutes of silence on Remembrance Day.

The bill is something which is not compelling on Canadians but it does seek to invite us to pause voluntarily for two minutes to remember those who fought so valiantly for the freedom we enjoy today. I commend my colleague from Calgary Southeast for bringing forward this initiative.

I had the opportunity to travel with the Minister of Veterans Affairs as part of a delegation to Dieppe, France last year. Veterans from across Canada were with us.

I had two brothers who were overseas and fought in the war. I had absolutely no idea what they had gone through until we came into the harbour of Dieppe, France. It was just like walls of cement that were almost as high as these walls here in the House. That was where the Germans were because they knew our troops were coming and as they got off the ships and approached the shore, the Germans picked them off one by one.

The people in Dieppe, France never forgot the sacrifices our people made. We had an opportunity to visit the French cemetery in Dieppe, France. It was the only night when there was any kind of mist and fog and it was going in and around the tombstones. All of a sudden this little lady arrived. It was almost as if she had come up from the grave. We all stood very stunned. She was Sister Valois.

An hon. member from the Liberal Party and I were helping some of the veterans. Some of them had to use wheelchairs after a few days because of the heat. I was pushing one of the wheelchairs when all of a sudden the gentleman said "It's Sister Valois, it's Sister Valois". Then they all joined in.

She was a nun, a nurse. When our boys arrived in Dieppe and when they were hurt, she was the one who took care of them. Five of our men who were there fighting during the war died in her arms. Our men had great respect for her and it was really an honour and a privilege to meet her.

At our Canadian cemetery we also had a huge service. All the young people, like the pages here, and even little ones smaller than them and others bigger than them, came over to us. We had Canada pins on. They would say "Please, please" and point to the pins. When we gave them our lapel pins, they said "Merci, merci" and hugged us. It meant so much to them. All down the promenade, from the top of every building and the windows there were Canadian flags. It was absolutely marvellous to see.

I have great respect for our veterans and I am sure most people do. Remembrance of the 114,000 Canadians who gave their lives to fight for the rights and freedoms of our citizens and the 1.6 million

who volunteered with them has become a very strong Canadian tradition. It has been encouraged by the veterans who steadfastly have performed and supported remembrance activities.

• (1810)

We mark Remembrance Day on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. It is the anniversary of the hour when guns fell silent in the year 1918, marking the end of World War I. Since then our veterans have faced World War II and the Korean war, and our peacekeepers have found themselves thrown into war zones where Canada is not a combatant.

On October 10, 1997 a private member's bill introduced in the Ontario legislature by Progressive Conservative MPP Morley Kells received royal assent. The bill is almost identical to the bill we are debating here tonight. Mr. Kells introduced his bill after he spent Remembrance Day in England one year.

Recently Great Britain restored the two minutes of silence to its Remembrance Day ceremonies. The two minutes of silence was once commonplace in England but had fallen into disuse. Mr. Kells witnessed the reinstatement of the two minutes of silence in England. He was so moved by the ceremony that he decided to introduce a bill in the Ontario legislature. The bill was passed. It calls on Ontarians to pause voluntarily for two minutes on Remembrance Day each year. I know of no one in this House of Commons who should be negative against our doing exactly the same here in Ottawa. It should be done here for our veterans right on Parliament Hill.

As time marches on our veterans are becoming less and less visible at Remembrance Day ceremonies across the country because of age, because of health, because of death. I as well as others are concerned that their legacy will fade.

I compliment the Royal Canadian Legion that goes into the schools to remind the children of November 11, Remembrance Day. The legion reminds the children of what it really means.

I was told that the Royal Canadian Legion asked the children of a little town to make wreaths and lay them down. The children did this. I was told that meant more to the veterans than if they had bought a wreath. The veterans saw that the children understood and cared enough for the veterans.

We must remember if it were not for our veterans, we would not be sitting here today in this Chamber. We would not be freely debating issues of policy and importance to our nation. It is up to our present generation and governments to take steps today to ensure our veterans' fight for our freedom is never forgotten. We must fuel the flame or the torch will never be passed on.

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Fortunately recent generations have never been called upon to volunteer for the massive war efforts Canada mounted in World War I and World War II. We must continue to commemorate our veterans' legacy. Two minutes of silence is a small step toward ensuring the memory of their valiant fight.

The Royal Canadian Legion has called on governments and Canadians to restore this two minutes of silence nationwide. It believes it will go a long way to enhance Remembrance Day among the new generation of Canadians, those who have not experienced the horror of war.

We have already seen the Department of Veterans Affairs support this initiative for which I thank it. It has published brochures outlining activities for schools during Veterans Week and suggesting that two minutes of silence be organized. I commend the DVA for this initiative.

Two years ago the present president of the Royal Canadian Legion, Mr. Joe Kobolak, wrote to the *Globe and Mail* on the subject of the two minutes of silence. I quote from his letter to the editor dated November 15:

There is nothing quite as expressive as silence. Britain discovered that on Monday when it stood still for two minutes to remember the war dead. Trains, buses and cars came to a stop. Children stood by their desks with heads bowed. Office workers took their phones off the hook. The floor of the stock exchange fell silent. TV networks turned off the sound.

In a hurry-up world that leaves little for contemplation, it was a magnificent gesture of national solidarity. Is there any reason that Canada should not follow the example? Canadians observe Remembrance Day in many ways—in schools, at Legion halls, on Parliament Hill. But remembering together, at the same moment, all across the country would lend the event a new force at a time when memories of war are fading. Let the Prime Minister declare that, beginning next year, Canadians from sea to sea shall observe two minutes of silence at the same time every November 11th. We owe it to the dead. We owe it to the yet unborn.

• (1815)

I agree with the president of the Royal Canadian Legion. I agree with the thrust of Mr. Kells' bill. I agree with my colleague's bill before us tonight. Simply put, the legislation is an act to provide for the observance of Remembrance Day in a way that it was initially meant to be. Two minutes is not a lot to ask for a lifetime of freedom.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-279, an act to promote two minutes of silence on Remembrance Day. I will make a 10 minute speech in support of two minutes of silence: two very important minutes observed by many in November of each year, two very important minutes of silence that are frequently overlooked by many others, including those whose employers grant them a day off to observe Remembrance Day.

Since Remembrance Day is not a day accorded the same importance as New Year's Day among other statutory holidays, Remembrance Day is most frequently associated with the phrase "banks and government offices are closed". For many who must work on Remembrance Day, any pause to remember our war dead is either overlooked or difficult. For those and far too many others the sacrifices of war are in a fog of memory at best.

I thank my colleague, the hon. member for Calgary Southeast, for his thoughtfulness in sponsoring this initiative. As the official opposition critic for veterans affairs, I assure the hon. member and the House that this initiative is greatly appreciated by Canadian veterans everywhere.

In life we value those who remember our sacrifices and our triumphs long after their occurrences. In death, those who take the time to remember the accomplishments of one who has passed on show respect for that person as well as acknowledging that person's contribution to the welfare of others.

With respect to our war dead, so many of whom died in their early twenties without marriage or children to pass on their legacy, remembrance of their sacrifices becomes all the more important.

The purpose of the bill, to be called the observance of two minutes of silence on Remembrance Day act, is invitational. There is no mandated requirement that two minutes of silence be observed throughout Canada on Remembrance Day. Perhaps there should be. Rather, it is stated in the bill that the people of Canada are invited to pause and observe two minutes of silence at 11 o'clock on each Remembrance Day to honour the men and women who died serving their country in wars and peacekeeping efforts.

I note this legislative initiative parallels a bill passed in the Ontario legislation in October 1997. That initiative was commenced by Mr. Morley Kells, by way of a private member's bill. It is of interest that the current initiative and that in Ontario are the result of the concerns of individual members rather than being an initiative of the government of the day. It is also regrettable that the bill in the House is not votable, given that comparable legislation was deemed to be of sufficient importance to have been voted on in the Ontario legislature.

I also wish the *Hansard* record to show that the current bill has been introduced by a member of the House who is not yet 30 years of age. Many of his peers do not have a precise appreciation of the sacrifices of war. It is refreshing to encounter an individual with such concern and appreciation at such a comparatively young age.

As witness to the recent Senate hearings on the Canadian war museum, I must say that the role of the museum in preserving the respect and memories of our soldiers is essential.

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● (1820)

Many argue, as do I, that the museum should be under the control of veterans affairs to allow for better representation by those whose memories are preserved in the museum. It is the Canadian War Museum that allows our young a chance to touch the history that won them the freedom they enjoy today. It is the Canadian War Museum that remembers the veterans every minute of every day and so too it must too receive the same thanks that our veterans receive.

In the current bill suggestions are made as to ways in which the people of Canada could promote the pause and the observance of two minutes of silence. Some of the suggestions are traditional and some are novel. It is suggested that Canadians could participate in a traditional Remembrance Day service at a war memorial.

Consistent with practices at most primary and secondary schools, it is suggested that Remembrance Day assemblies be held. It is also suggested that similar assemblies be held at post-secondary institutions, colleges and universities, where to the best of my knowledge Remembrance Day practices are less common.

Consistent with practices in Europe but not common in Canada, it is suggested that driving Canadians could stop their vehicles along the side of the road and sit or, as I suggest, stand quietly for two minutes. It is also suggested that factory assembly lines may shut down and that at all workplaces persons observe two minutes of silence. The final suggestion is that Remembrance Day services be held in places of worship.

Silence is an important component to healthy reflection. Many scorn those who wish to reflect on the past. Somehow this perspective sees a lesson from the past as a hindrance to healthy living in the present. This same approach to life also denies that one's actions can have a positive or negative effect on others. Respect is often contagious.

When soldiers go to war they do not do so on the basis of "I am the only one who matters". Instead, there is a collective sense of purpose, a sense of placing one's life at risk for the greater good of others, a willingness to sacrifice in the support of a higher purpose and an appreciation that personal sacrifice can and does have a profound effect on the direction of history.

There is also in the military a very keen sense of history and an appreciation that one must learn from the lessons of history in order to ensure that past mistakes are not repeated. To say to a military person that all that matters is to be here now is to invite a response combining amazement and pity.

The world in which we currently find ourselves is one in which instant gratification and self-interest are celebrated. There is no need to make a commitment to any person or ideal other than

oneself. It seems there is no need to remember the sacrifices that others made for our future welfare.

If we are to progress as a nation and as individuals we must remember those who sacrificed their lives for us. In houses of worship we are often asked to sit silently, to contemplate how we can improve ourselves in our daily lives. In silent contemplation for but two minutes on Remembrance Day we are invited to contemplate how others have contributed to our ability to improve ourselves in our daily lives. A single soldier dead 50, 75 or 100 years has made such a contribution to our welfare that we must remember the sacrifice.

I applaud the hon. member for Calgary Southeast for this initiative. My colleague is truly representative of Lieutenant-Colonel McCrae's sentiments as he takes up the torch and holds it high "lest we forget".

Mrs. Judi Longfield (Whitby—Ajax, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in the short minute available to me I want to say how proud I am to stand here and offer my support for the bill before us.

I certainly would take issue with some of the comments about reducing this to one minute. I believe two minutes is not a great deal of time to ask anyone to stand and pay tribute to those who have paid the supreme sacrifice on our behalf. It is the very least we can do.

● (1825)

I urge all members of the House to vigorously lend their support. It will take time and effort on the part of all of us. These are simply words on paper until such time as they take action. We need to lend our support to our legions, to make certain that each and every one of us do our part in making sure the very valuable initiative on the part of the member opposite comes to fruition.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to conclude debate on the bill. At the outset I thank members of all parties for their words and I think their support.

I would however put to the hon. member of the Bloc Quebecois that the bill is not proposing two minutes frivolously. This is a tradition which is decades old. It is what the Royal Canadian Legion has recommended as an appropriate period of observance. It is what the mother parliament, Westminster, has enacted by way of a motion. It is what the Ontario legislature has passed through unanimous vote. I suggest that two minutes, as the previous member has suggested, is not too much to ask for what we are commemorating.

However, if amendments were permitted to the bill I would be happy to remove the specific reference to two minutes and to have it stated as a moment of silence. I am not particularly concerned about the precise wording. I am more concerned about the sentiment which the bill attempts to express.

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I also agree with the comments of the previous speaker that this kind of honorific statute is of no effect if the spirit of it is not taken up by Canadians.

One of the roles of parliament is to exercise national leadership. Part of that leadership should be in demonstrating the importance of our national symbols, one of which is a moment of silence. That is why I bring forward the bill as an act on the part of all members to provide us with an opportunity to exercise leadership in this regard. It would be for all Canadians to observe it.

It has happened, as the hon. member for Saint John has so eloquently pointed out, in the United Kingdom where this practice fell out of use. It has now led to a remarkable moving silence in every corner of the United Kingdom. There is no reason why we could not replicate that experience here.

In closing I refer to a anecdote about a particular Canadian soldier which would bring to mind the need for this kind of commemoration and to take it so seriously. I refer to a story reported in a book on direct democracy by a former member of this place, Patrick Boyer. He dedicated the book to a man by the name Gib Boxall who died at age 24 on June 9, 1944.

Gib Boxall was involved in the D-Day landing. He was one of the more than 1,000 Canadians who were killed in that war. When Canadian Sergeant Alf Allen was asked about his experience in digging some of the graves for Canadian soldiers, he said that he came across the body of Gilbert Boxall and said:

He came from Canwood in northern Saskatchewan, grew up in the Depression and had very little of this world's goods. He'd never have had been the stick man in a British Guards parade but as a dedicated working man there was none better. He landed in the assault wave on, gave first aid on the beach and in the battle inland. On D-plus 3, running to a chap he heard calling for help, he was cut down and killed. On his body we latter found five dried shell dressings—he'd five wounds prior to being killed. He never said a word to anybody, just crawled away somewhere, put a dressing on and went back in.

● (1830)

That is the kind of heroism and courage which we can never do enough to recognize and commemorate. For that reason, I want to close by inviting all members to support this bill and to seek unanimous consent to make it a votable bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to make this bill a votable bill?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: No.

Mr. Peter Adams: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I want it to be clear that, as you know and as members opposite know, this bill received great support from this side of the House.

Unanimous consent was not forthcoming, not for concerns about the content of the bill but because of the procedural matter. As members know, we have a committee that selects private members' legislation. It determines which shall be votable or not votable. We do not wish to circumvent our colleagues on that committee.

Mr. Jason Kenney: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think that was more a point of debate. I will simply say that that point of order points to the need for reform of the means by which we handle private members' business.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped from the order paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

CANADA PENSION PLAN

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Ref.): Madam Speaker, the Canada pension plan affects all Canadians. They have a right to know the important details of this plan and how it will affect their retirement security.

I have asked the Minister of Finance on at least seven occasions to disclose the real rate of return that young Canadians can expect to receive on their lifetime CPP investment.

The minister has avoided answering the question all seven times, therefore, here I am again. I would like to repeat that I am asking about the real rate of return, not a rate increased by inflation.

To assist the minister in his response, I also point out that I do not want to hear of some hypothetical sum that would be returned after 35 years. I am interested in the real rate of return on an annual basis.

To further assist the minister, I would like to refresh his memory with respect to the Canada pension plan's sixteenth and latest actuarial report with which I am sure he is familiar.

Page 14 of this report shows a table with the real rate of return calculated for contributors to the Canada pension plan. For someone born in 1948, 4.9%; for someone born in 1968, 2.5%; for

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someone born in 1988, 1.9%; and for someone born in 2012, 1.8%. I might point out that a 1.8% real return is less than one half the real rate of return available through Government of Canada RRSP bonds.

I know the minister has in hand a pre-written, canned response. I also know from sad experience that this not only will fail to answer my question, but it will not even come close to doing so.

I ask the government to just throw away that canned response that is now in the hand of a member opposite and not to insult Canadians again with any well crafted, carefully crafted self-promotion.

I ask the government to spare us also the well-worn attacks against my party with fictitious numbers thrown in for good effect. Just give Canadians a rare, straightforward answer to a direct question.

I simply ask this government to come clean and admit that the real rate of return on their lifetime CPP investment for young Canadians, still too young to vote and many yet unborn, will fall below 2% and in fact will be only 1.8% I look forward to the government's answer.

• (1835)

Mrs. Sue Barnes (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to clarify some points about the rate of return that Canadians will receive from the Canada pension plan.

A generation of Canadians born in 1988 will earn an effective rate of return on their CPP contributions of 1.9%, comparing the benefits they can expect to receive to the contributions they will make. However, the Reform Party does not tell you that this return accounts for commitments already made under the CPP. In fact 6.1% of the 9.9% steady stay contribution rate in 2003 will pay for the benefits of contributors. The rest is needed to pay for the plan's unfunded liability which is currently around \$600 billion.

The effective rate for contributors would be higher if the contribution rate was only 6.1%. However, this would be possible only if we reneged on commitments already made under the CPP or paid them from a source the Reform Party has not identified.

The money actually invested in the CPP under the new, more fully funded approach is expected to earn a 3.8% of return after inflation. This is comparable to the returns of any large pension plan in the private sector.

Finally, the hon. member should know that the recent report of the Association of Canadian Pension Management supports a retirement system that includes the CPP as well as employer plans and RRSPs. It does not support, and I stress it does not support, the kind of privatized system that the Reform Party wants. On the contrary. It points out that private plans can have much higher investment costs than the CPP to the investor's disadvantage. Those are the facts.

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, on December 10, 1997, I asked a question to the human resources development minister.

I asked him if he was aware that the unemployment insurance reform had increased poverty. What is nice with the adjournment motions is that, between the day where we ask the question and the one where we move our adjournment motion, new information becomes available.

In the last two weeks, we have received very conclusive answers that really demonstrate in a clear, convincing and definite fashion that the employment insurance reform has created a lot of poverty in Canada.

A very solid study done by a distinguished professor, Mr. Fortin, showed that, for Quebec alone, there are 200,000 people who, in 1989, would have been eligible to employment insurance but did not benefit from it because of the restrictive rules that have been systematically imposed since that time.

The minister tells us that there is a regular follow-up and that a report will be submitted. He talked about this in December, but we received the report at the beginning of February, and it contained absolutely no recommendation to amend the Employment Insurance Act.

We considered the issue at the human resources development committee and there is currently a motion before the committee to report to the House, so that the hon. members can do the work the employment commission should have done, which is to see where the situation stands.

Following the reform, the number of people on the welfare rolls increased by 200,000 in Quebec and 750,000 throughout Canada, which significantly reduces the chances for the unemployed to get back into the labour market. The situation is quite clear. Time is of the essence.

It is important for the minister of Human Resources Development to stop saying that he is making the appropriate follow-up. He now has the results and he can see that the operation is very disappointing indeed. If we do not take the necessary corrective action as soon as possible, we will be faced with permanent consequences.

This will have a negative impact, since more people, especially low income or poorly educated workers, are systematically joining the welfare rolls and leaving the workforce. These people are less happy, less satisfied and are added burdens to our society. They have no way of increasing their self-esteem and getting interesting results.

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• (1840)

Today, I want to ask the minister, through the parliamentary secretary, the following question: Now that we are convinced that this is an urgent matter, will the Minister of Human Resources Development take concrete steps so that the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development can present him with short term recommendations to amend the Employment Insurance Act in order to correct the inequity that was created, the terrible vacuum that is forcing a lot of people back onto the welfare rolls and creating poverty?

Should the federal government that wants to fight poverty not use the first tool available and, instead of accumulating a \$25 billion surplus in the employment insurance fund by the year 2000, return that program to its original purpose and use that money to help those who, unfortunately, do not have a job, those who need a sufficient income between jobs?

Recently, we heard testimony, on television, from people who, after contributing to the EI fund for 30 years, had left their job for a year and then, when they returned and needed EI benefits, got no more than \$130 a week.

Is there anybody in this House who could live on \$130 a week? This is totally unacceptable.

So, if he thinks there is an urgent need, last December, the minister told us that there was no—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but his time is up.

[*English*]

Mrs. Sue Barnes (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member is mistaken when he suggests that employment insurance has increased poverty.

The first major reform in 25 years is fundamentally about helping Canadians get back to work quickly. The old system encouraged ongoing dependence and did not address structural unemployment. The new reform invests in people who are prepared to invest in themselves. It is fair, balanced and reflects the job market of realities across Canada.

The employment insurance system combines income support with practical results oriented, active employment measures. To help unemployed Canadians get back to work, an additional \$800 million will be reinvested annually in re-employment measures, bringing the federal funding to more than \$2.7 billion annually by 2000-2001.

In addition, a three year transition jobs fund is now in place to help create lasting jobs in the high unemployment rate regions of this country. Co-operation with provincial and territorial governments and the private sector in developing and delivering these benefits is an essential part of the EI system.

Labour market agreements with 11 provinces and territories will reduce the overlap, duplication of efforts and ensure that employment programs meet local and regional needs. As well, decisions on the most appropriate forms of assistance to help the unemployed get back to work will benefit from the insights of those most closely in touch with local markets.

The government with EI reform ensured that the new system was fairer and more equitable. The new system provides a family income supplement to help those with children. Because the entrance requirement is now based on hours of work instead of weeks, 500,000 additional part time workers will have their work insured for the first time.

Labour market conditions are now substantially improving. As 1998 begins the unemployment rate has dropped to its lowest level in seven years. More than one million—

YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.): Madam Speaker, on November 24, 1997, I asked the Minister of Justice when she was going to amend the Young Offenders Act. It has been 108 days and I still have not heard a response to this question. In those 108 days there have been numerous cases of violent young offenders committing some of the most heinous crimes.

With no legislation to deter these youth, they are literally running wild. The justice minister continues to call these isolated incidents and isolated cases, but statistics prove otherwise. What she does not like to hear is the actual cases which illustrate the level of violence now seen in our youth today.

On November 21 in Victoria, seven teenage girls and one boy were charged with the death of 14 year old Reena Virk. These teens beat this girl to death and threw her body in a gorge.

Just before Christmas in Saskatchewan, two 15 year old girls were charged with first degree murder in the stabbing death of 58 year old Helen Montgomery who ran a custody care facility for young offenders where the suspects were living.

On January 19 in Lethbridge a single mom was killed by her 13 year old daughter and her daughter's 15 year old boyfriend.

On January 20 in Kitchener, Ontario, a 17 year old hacked off the hair of a 14 year old with a knife and beat her so badly that her eyes were swollen shut.

• (1845)

What is so remarkable about all these cases is not only the level of violence but that they were all girls.

I could go on and on to cite these incidents, and those I have mentioned happened since I asked the question, but I would like to talk about one young man named Keith Addy who feels that legislators are not responsible for our justice system today. I want

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him to know that I have heard him and I do recognize the need for change and that the Reform Party is working for it.

Keith Addy was struck by a stolen vehicle driven by a young offender which caused major head injuries to the 23 year old security guard.

The young offender was sentenced to six months in a detention facility and 24 months in the open custody of a group home. He will not be allowed to drive for five years.

What struck me about Keith Addy's letter is his insightfulness into the Young Offenders Act. His letter is entitled "Young Offenders law a joke to criminals in waiting".

He goes on to state that as a victim he feels that the government clearly cares more about those who offend than those who do not. That is quite obvious.

He states that the Young Offenders Act should be gone because these are not misunderstood youth, they are hard core criminals in training. He states that parents should be made accountable for not maintaining proper supervision and control of their children. He signs off by stating "Thanks for nothing".

This young man is clearly enraged with this useless piece of legislation and I totally agree. His bitterness is shared by tens of thousands of people and is growing with each passing day.

The calls for change are coming from across the nation from police chiefs, police associations, provincial attorneys general, social service ministers, teachers, parents and of course the Reform Party, but most of all they are coming from the young people themselves. They are calling for the YOA to be scrapped, since they are living in fear of being the next victim.

The Reform Party has drafted the necessary proposals for change in record time. The justice minister no longer has any excuses. Her time is up on this issue.

The outrage across this nation is so obvious that even the Liberals, if they could get it through their thick heads, should be able to understand that the people of this country are sick and tired of hearing about the violence caused by these young offenders. These people have refused to move. The act has been in place for 14 years. They have done a 10 year review. They flew across the country to consult, consult, consult.

If Liberals stood on the street corner in any city of this country Canadians would tell them to get rid of the Young Offenders Act. For Pete's sake, send a message to these young violent people that it will no longer be tolerated.

Mrs. Sue Barnes (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, reviewing the Young

Offenders Act is a priority for the Minister of Justice, but it is clear that legislative reforms alone would not have prevented any of these tragedies.

Legislative reform is one tool among many to deal with issues of youth crime and the most effective approach would be a comprehensive youth justice strategy that includes proactive as well as reactive measures.

The solicitor general and the justice minister plan to launch a community based crime prevention initiative in 1998 and particular attention will be paid to measures for children and youth. Individual communities are well placed to identify their challenges and needs, and our initiative will encourage a partnership approach to helping communities prevent and reduce crime.

If, however, serious crimes are committed by young people, we need a legal regime that is fully capable of responding. Criminal laws and criminal law principles must be applied appropriately to young offenders. Criminal behaviour committed by young people needs to be denounced as wrong. Young people capable of forming criminal intent should be considered criminally responsible and held accountable for their misdeeds through fair and proportionate penalties.

Intensive rehabilitation and reintegration efforts may need to be applied to serious young offenders to promote the protection of the public by giving young offenders the best chance at becoming law-abiding and productive adults.

Criminal acts by youth range from high spirited behaviour to murder, and the response needs to be effective and proportionate. For less serious offences accountability and responsibility can be achieved by some innovative alternatives such as restorative justice approaches.

The goal of the comprehensive strategy would be an effective youth justice system in which the public could have confidence. It is never too early to intervene in the lives of troubled young people and never too late.

The intervention, however, must be appropriate and effective. We do not want to be incarcerating our children at disproportionately high rates, nor do we want people labouring—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but the time has expired.

The motion to adjourn the House is deemed adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.49 p.m.)

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